

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SMALL-SCALE ARTIST RUN 'INDIE' MUSIC BUSINESSES IN BRISBANE

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BCI Interdisciplinary

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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March 2014

Keywords

Artist Run, Art Worlds, Bourdieu, Brisbane, Case Studies, Cultural Production, Cultural Studies, DIY, Foucault. Indie, Internet, Independent Labels, Media, Mp3, Major Labels, Music Business, Music Piracy, Music Scenes, New Media, Online, Qualitative Research, Small-Scale, Social Media, Record Stores, Virtual

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the drivers around, and practices in, small-scale artist-run music businesses in Brisbane, and understand how these businesses are impacting on and relating to the scenes which they operate in. The music industry has been in a constant state of change and with the recent development of online technologies for the dissemination of music, the current ecology is no exception. In fact the rate of change has accelerated. Musicians can now use a set of tools integrated with Web 2.0 (Carafano 2009 N.P.) to engage with an emerging network of other musicians who also choose to run their businesses with relative autonomy from the established industry networks—networks that have previously had a hegemonic relationship with musicians and small collectives/record labels (Hesmondhalgh 1998). Furthermore, the relationship between established music networks and small-scale music networks is changing so that many avenues previously only available to major labels and large independent labels are now open to artist-run small-scale producers (Strachan 2003, 2007).

This thesis employs three qualitative case studies of music businesses that operate in a field of musical production which has come to be associated with the musical genre called ‘indie’. These case studies will provide specific and focused new data in order better to understand the nature of Brisbane small-scale music production as well as its relationship to the history of small-scale production in the creative industries, and its relationship with the current ecology of the music industry.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Site background

The Brisbane Music Scene

Until the late 1980s Brisbane was viewed as a large town in the sub-tropics by its more culturally established neighbors, Melbourne and Sydney, despite its status as a capital city and its musical history. In the latter part of the 80s an inquiry into corruption brought down the conservative quasi-dictatorship of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen¹ (an infamous figure in Australian political history), (Stampford 2010 pp. 212-228) and as host to World Expo 88, Brisbane had begun its evolution towards its current status as a cosmopolitan progressive city (Rogers 2008, p. 642; Stafford 2006 pp. 2-5). Although some stigma exists today from this conservative history, to those who participate in the cultural sectors of the city and to those who document it for both media and academic purposes, this view of Brisbane is considered out of touch with the current reality (Rogers 2008 pp. 642-647; Eliezer 2007).

Under the infamous period of Petersen's regime Brisbane's music scene was quietly evolving (Stafford 2006 pp. 2-5). During this time Brisbane band 'The Saints' released their first album, '(I'm) Stranded', which is now considered one of the seminal releases in the 'Do-It-Yourself' punk movement—a scene mainly born out of New York and London (Stafford 2006 pp. 70-73; Rogers 2009 p. 645; Walker 1996). Within the Australian music industry Brisbane's music scene is considered responsible for a number of widely successful acts such as *Powderfinger*, *Regurgitator* and *Custard* (Rogers 2009 pp. 646). More recently, adding to the esteem of Brisbane's scene, in May of 2007 Billboard magazine listed Brisbane as one of the global hotspots for live music (Eliezer 2007; Rogers 2008 p. 643; Stafford 2006 pp. 2-5).

Currently there are numerous record labels and management firms in the city managing and promoting a number of 'large-scale' professional bands, such as *The*

¹ Queensland Premier 1968-87

Hungry Kids of Hungary, The John Steel Singers and *DZ Deathrays*. Complementary to this economically successful industry is a burgeoning ‘Do-It-Yourself’ (DIY) underground scene and these scenes regularly cross-pollinate and interact (Rogers et al. 2009 p. 4). There are many music venues in Brisbane, ranging from a capacity of 100 and less (e.g. The Waiting Room) to 14,500 (Brisbane Entertainment Center). Despite Brisbane’s perceived esteem within the industry, academic studies of the music industries of Brisbane are limited.

Researcher Background

As a participant in the Australian small-scale music scene I bring my own professional understandings to this study. Prior to my signing of a contract in 2009 with the music management firm ‘Mucho Bravado’, I released five albums that were recorded entirely on my laptop computer.² Through my reputation as a performer and self-managed artist, I became a regular speaker at industry events. Progressing from these events in 2009, I was hired as a lecturer at a private tertiary provider.³ This led to many instances where I referred to my own experiences as a small-scale practitioner when delivering academic lectures and industry presentations.

As my lecturing career expanded, I realised further study was required on my behalf in order to provide a broader context for students and colleagues. On a daily basis I was required to examine my own music career and the careers of other small-scale practitioners through both cultural and business lenses which led to a desire to research these questions within a formal academic structure. As such, the research aim of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the working environment of small-scale, artist-run, music businesses located in Brisbane, businesses that operate in a field which is generally defined as ‘indie’ regarding the musical principles adhered to by the artists.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Guglielmino

³ JMC Academy

Research Parameters

In this thesis I argue that artist-run small-scale ‘indie’ music businesses do not have a stable ethos or nature—rather they oscillate in response to the environment in which the business owners operate. I propose that small-scale artists describe key indications of success in ways that are best analysed using the cultural and social frameworks of Bourdieu (1970, cf also 1984,1990,1993,1996). However their descriptions of their music and ethos do not necessarily match their intentions and methods of production: while their musical products can be marketed and distributed in a traditional way, to be considered “indie”, the aesthetic of the music must be oppositional to purely commercial ends and display a ‘disinterestedness’ in the commercial market in order to appeal to the cultural field that engages with the production and promotion of small-scale musical goods (Bourdieu 1984; 1990; 1993; 1996).

As a result, indie discourse tends to obfuscate commercial aims and ambitions of its producing practitioners. However, due to the participatory nature of my research, and the fact that my own small-scale releases form part of this study, I am able to report that small-scale music producers in Brisbane do indeed spend time considering the market for their releases and formulate plans to expand their market in an attempt to reach larger audiences. As I outline in the literature review below, producers in the small-scale indie scene have historically provided a rich harvesting ground for major labels (Bennett et al. 2004 p. 3). This thesis describes the paradox of a commercially oppositional ethos, that, at times, limits small-scale producers in their ability to make a living from their music or to run successful businesses, even when there is a market—and market ambitions—for their music. However, I also note that although it is often the case that no economic capital is raised by these small-scale ventures, artists nevertheless can enjoy the benefits of symbolic capital that, in some cases, is later converted into economic capital.

Small-scale music businesses have been widely investigated by a number of researchers working in different artistic fields (see Chapter 2). While most research is conducted by a researcher positioned as an external observer, my approach has been different. I place myself as a participant within these businesses and conduct the

studies as an insider of the Brisbane small-scale scene. Therefore I am able to offer new insights into the rationale, nature, and ontology of small-scale music businesses previously only available to practitioners. While the distinction and difference that is apparent when an artist directs a micro business is well documented in visual arts research, most research into small-scale music businesses does not focus on the ‘artist-run’ business (see Chapter 2). The examination of ‘artist-run’ small-scale music businesses is therefore a unique outcome of this thesis. Finally, as noted in the introduction and the literature review, academic research into the Brisbane music scene is limited—this thesis seeks to expand knowledge about a scene that has produced, and continues to produce, multiple artists of national and international significance, often without the support or involvement of major industry.

Definitions

For the purposes of my research, *small-scale production* is defined as businesses that sell fewer than 2000 units per release and turn over less than \$60,000 per year. In my case studies the business partners are artists who are not bound by contractual arrangements, which allow a managing company or partner to interfere with creativity or career direction (however a number do contract industry professionals to help with the delivery of their cultural products). Furthermore, these business operators and artists own at least a controlling percentage of the copyright in their artistic product and usually retain 100%. Although a part of their income is derived from the selling and promotion of recorded music, all of these businesses have a live music component for the promotion of their works and two of them use live shows to generate income for cross-subsiding recording and production.

The businesses I study are situated in an area that is commonly referred to by industry professionals and music journalists as “indie” or “independent”. In some contexts the term ‘indie’ is used exclusively as a description of a musical genre that has its roots in the oppositional punk networks of the 1970s but became popular in the 1990s (Hesmondhalgh 1999 p. 34). The terminology of “indie” has been problematised through its over-use and multiple meanings—an issue which I unpack

in the contextual review in chapter 3. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the term *small-scale music business* rather than “indie” to describe the subjects of the study.

In framing my enquiry, I use the term “music industries” rather than its singular form because there are multiple non-contiguous aspects to the problem: that is, a change in one aspect of the industry does not necessarily lead to another aspect being affected in the same way (Williamson and Cloonan, 2007 pp. 311-312). I note that most studies privilege the term ‘recording industry’ when dealing with research into commercial aspects of music (Chapter 2). However music is comprised of global networks that are subject to varying effectors. In this study I attempt to examine small-scale production by unpacking all revenue streams generated by the small-scale producers. In the case of my own business I include personal income generated from work which has a symbiotic relationship with my ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984). My research shows that revenue streams other than those from recording sales and distribution are very important to the viability of small-scale practitioners.

Research Questions

This overarching question for this research is:

What are the commercial, cultural, and operational characteristics of small-scale, artist-run music businesses in the Brisbane music industry from 2010 to 2013?

I have developed a set of sub-questions to focus the study. They are:

1. How do small-scale, artist-run businesses contribute to the commercial and cultural ecologies of Brisbane music?
2. What is the relationship between profit and cultural motivations among small-scale producers in Brisbane?
3. What are the relationships between such businesses and the scenes within which they operate?

Approaches to the study

This thesis takes a qualitative approach to the research question. I use semi-structured interviews and participant observations, which also includes my own experience as the owner-operator of a small-scale music business in Brisbane. These data are used to build three case studies. The case studies are positioned with a literature review (Chapter 2) and a contextual review (Chapter 3). As with any qualitative study, I use triangulation so that conclusions can be confirmed through a number of different sources (Stake 2003 p. 148). Stake defines triangulation as ‘a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation’ (Stake 2003, p148).

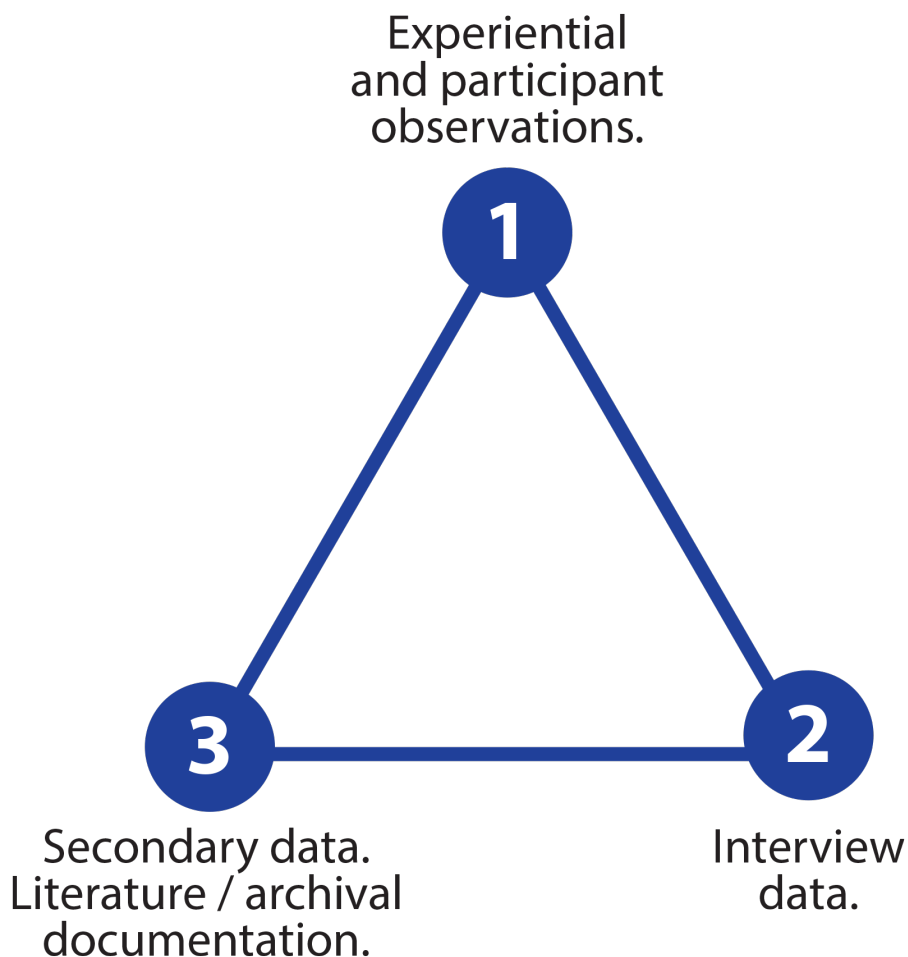


Fig 1. Triangulation for method used to test data and theory.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Ayres suggests that semi-structured interviews begin with a series of ‘predetermined but open-ended questions’ (2008 pp. 810-811). The aim of such questions is to generate new and deeper questions that follow from initial responses. As many of the participants in my interviews were colleagues of mine from my years of activity within the Brisbane music scene, the interviews were generally relaxed and conversational. My personal relationships with the participants afforded me the ability to delve deeper into the characteristics of each business’s operation at quite detailed levels. I was not just an interviewer but also a participant with “insider” knowledge. In each of the case studies I was therefore privileged to see the inner workings of each business. I used these experiences to better define my questions as the study progressed. However, my close relationship with the participants and the field I was studying raised some ethical considerations.

It is the ethnographer’s responsibility not only to think a bit first, but to make conscious decisions on what to report and what to decline to report based on careful consideration of the ethical dimensions of the impact of the information on those who provide it, and the goals of the research (Dewalt, Dewalt et al. 1998 p. 273).

In other words, by being so closely connected to the study and the field, I recognise the risk of including, excluding, or misrecognising responses based on my own experience. With this in mind I made sure to test my experience against the answers given by respondents, and against secondary data from industry publications and published research, thus using triangulation to moderate any possible biases of my insider’s perspective. This approach led me to understand that I was testing a working hypothesis about these businesses (Leech 2002): that they do not have a stable ethos in respect of commercial ends. Rather, they oscillate in response to shifts in the cultural, technical, and commercial influences affecting the field. In documenting the studies, I have indicated certain situations without going into specifics in order to protect the participants’ reputations, such as my use of the term ‘party favors’ to describe certain activities which form a part of some of the music

spaces I examine. I call on the reader to draw their own conclusions so as not to risk the reputation of the participants.

Due to the reflexive nature of my method, at times the interview questions changed during the study. The reasons for these changes include a realisation that some questions were of greater importance than others for participants. For example: the issues of technological advancements were far less important to the participants than I had imagined. Also, some of my definitions were not suitable to begin with: I was using the terminology ‘Do-It-Yourself’ to describe these businesses. But in my interviews I discovered that this was a loaded terminology for the respondents because of its links with amateur projects. That is how the term *small-scale* became central to this thesis and the interviews that inform it.

In the case of my own project, I kept diaries of the period leading up to and including the release of a record. I used the research and interview questions as a lens through which to develop a case study of my own work. I also used my project as a means of delving deeper into the insider’s perspective. For that reason I conducted my own case study after completing the two external cases.

Case Studies

A recognised strength of a case study approach is ‘that data can be collected from a variety of sources, both qualitative and quantitative. These include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts’ (Chetty, 1996, p. 74). The most noted weakness of the case study is that it is not considered to be generalisable (Chetty 1996, p. 74). However, Chetty notes that the case study approach can both test and generate theory, and, when used in multiple studies across a specific area of activity, can be used to generalise:

Each case is looked at as a separate entity, enabling unique patterns, which can be generalised across cases, to emerge. Cross-case comparisons can also be made. These comparisons force researchers to go beyond initial impressions and take a more in-depth, structured approach with the data. (Chetty, 1996, p. 76)

In terms of communication of results, the case study provides a means to describe a much clearer picture of the environment being studied for the reader than can a statistical, sample-driven study (Stake 1978 p5). The case studies in this thesis are best described as fieldwork using methods borrowed from participant observation (Simmons 2007 p14). All three cases are artist-run small-scale music businesses. The first case study (Chapter 4) is a study of a partnership between two artists, Tom Cooney and Denny Ryan, which is titled *El Niño El Niño*; the second case study (Chapter 5) is a company formed by four partners—Andrew White, Phil Laidlaw, Christopher Perren, and Gregory Cooper—called *Lofly Hangar*; the final case study (Chapter 6) is an examination of my own business, *Edward Guglielmino & The Show*.

Stake (1978) outlines two central aspects of case studies:

[The case study] is distinctive in the first place by giving great prominence to what is and what is not "the case"—the boundaries are kept in focus. What is happening and deemed important within those boundaries (the emic) is considered vital and usually determines what the study is about, as contrasted with other kinds of studies where hypotheses or issues previously targeted by the investigators (the etic) usually determine the content of the study (1978, p. 7).

Regarding ‘the emic’ boundaries of my study: the cases I present, including my own, are small-scale artist-run music businesses based in Brisbane that sold fewer than 2000 units per release and turned over less than \$60,000 per year. The partners in these businesses are also artists and are not bound by contractual arrangements that require a managing company or partner to be involved with creativity or career direction. These business operators and composers also own a controlling percentage of the copyright of their artistic product.

As noted above, my perspectives on the cases can also be seen as ‘emic’ in Pike’s (1967) original sense of the word: namely that I am an “insider” in the field I am

researching. According to Harris (1976), that means my “insider” relationship to the field of research will likely generate different insights from the “outsider” (or etic) approaches taken by most previous studies in this area. Harris notes that in any ‘etic’ study, interaction between the researcher and their research participants

... is deemed productive only to the extent that principles of organization or structure that exist outside of the minds of the actors have been discovered. These principles may in fact be contrary to the principles elicitable from the actors themselves with respect to the manner in which they organize their imaginations, concepts, and thoughts in the identified domain (Harris, 1976, p. 331).

My rationale for using three case studies is therefore based on a desire to identify and theorise the characteristics of the field based using an approach that accommodates the involvement of my own experiences while simultaneously creating generalisable knowledge about this important area of cultural production.

Often the knowledge I obtained from the external case studies is best described as tacit or unstated, and so accounting for this knowledge in the thesis requires an insiders understanding of the field rather than a strictly ‘etic’ statistical analysis. This becomes more evident below in the case study chapters. I present each of the cases in a narrative form to best demonstrate the ethos of these businesses. The data regarding the finances of the first two case studies are limited because the participants were protective of their economic figures or, in some cases, were unaware of actual figures. In any case, the figures turned out to be the least interesting and insightful aspects of the study.

Combined, the use of interviews and case study, set within the theoretical lens of Bourdieu’s approach to analysing culture, provide a rich description of important features that define the commercial, cultural, and operational characteristics of this important field of cultural production.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This literature review positions the thesis in its theoretical context and provides a history of research in the field of independent music production. I also canvas a history of research into small-scale, artist-run artistic businesses focused on the field of visual arts (in the absence of literature in music). Further, I include literature on music scenes and subcultures more generally, and an overview of literature studying Brisbane's music history. The studies considered here almost universally apply empirical ethnographic methodologies. That is, the authors were not participants within the fields they study, rather they examine the scenes externally. This accounts for some of the different conclusions by these researchers.

Cultural Theory

Pierre Bourdieu

Much of the influential literature outlining the nature of small-scale operations in the creative industries uses Bourdieu's (1977;1984;1990;1993;1996) analytical framework (eg Hesmondhalgh 1998; Strachan 2003,2007; Mitchell 2007; O'Connor 2008). Bourdieu's theory distinguishes between small-scale production – both economically and culturally – and the large-scale production houses in 19th Century French cultural production (1993, 1996). His approach usefully translates to contemporary small and large-scale cultural production in many of the current creative industries, including the music business (cf. Hesmondhalgh 1998; Strachan 2003,2007; Mitchell 2007; O'Connor 2008).

Bourdieu asserts that 'differences in cultural capital mark the differences between the classes' and claims that individuals assert their class through 'symbolic goods' and systems of taste which, combined, comprise people's 'cultural capital' (1984 p. 64).

Bourdieu's central theoretical construct is 'habitus', it refers to the system of 'dispositions' that individuals develop within specific cultural environments (1990).

The conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. [...]. As an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions in the particular conditions of its production – and only those. ... [T]he habitus is an infinite capacity for creating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production ... (Bourdieu, 1990 pp. 53-55).

Bourdieu uses the term ‘capital’ to describe both economic and non-economic ‘symbolic goods’ (Bourdieu 1977). For Bourdieu, the term “Capital” means a system of partially fungible values that are culturally bound and involved with social, historical, and class-based structures (1990). Such as social capital (roughly meaning social network), and cultural capital (meaning one’s ability to comprehend advanced cultural goods).

Lastly the concept of ‘Field’ is partially borrowed in part from Weber’s view that society cannot be viewed as just economic classes and ethos. Rather, structured spaces exist which have their own social rules, hierarchies and conceptual frameworks.

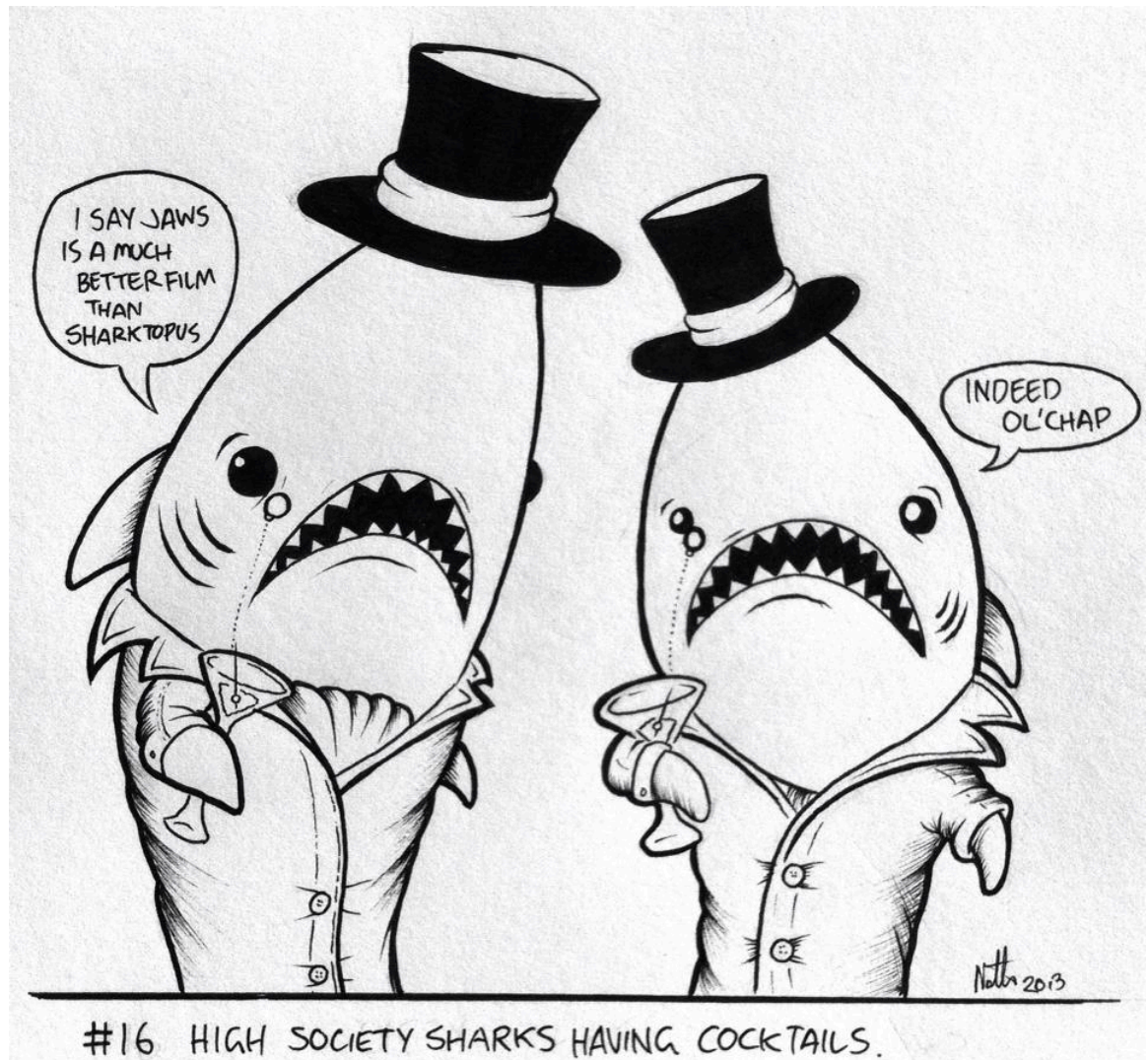


Fig. 2 High society sharks having cocktails - by Nathan Smith (2013).

In these more recent essays Bourdieu (1993/1996) concludes that the field of cultural production differs from the normal economic ecology due to a collective belief around one of two separate fields; the field of small-scale production is interested in 'art for art's sake' (1993, p. 128) (disinterested in the commercial and critical outcomes of production) and the field of large-scale production is economically focused (the production of content for broad profitable audiences).

There are two opposing measures of success in these artistic fields: large-scale production is based on financial merit, whereas small-scale production is based on autonomous merit—artists who create work which is unique and does not attempt to engage with the commercial field (Bourdieu 1993 p. 38, 1996 p. 114, 117). Bourdieu

describes autonomous, small-scale production as 'loser wins' or 'systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all other economies' (1993 p39).

‘To assert the autonomy of production is to give primacy to that of which the artist is master, i.e., form, manner, style, rather than the 'subject', the external referent, which involves subordination to functions’ (Bourdieu 1984 p. 3)

One of these two fields—which Bourdieu describes as ‘inverted’, or ‘diametrically’ opposed (Bourdieu 1993 p. 35; 1996 p. 115)— determines whether a given work is considered legitimate (1993 pp. 39-42; 1996 p. 114, 117). Furthermore artists can move between these two fields. For example, if an autonomous producer of cultural content finds their work in demand and economically viable, this will cause them to shift from the autonomous (small-scale) field towards the heteronomous (large-scale) field (1993 p46); or the opposite situation may also occur when an in vogue artist goes out of style and moves towards the more autonomous field (1993 p. 48).

Bourdieu (1996) also suggests another possibility of a shift from one field to another: if a large amount of time is spent at the autonomous end of the pole it may lead to the collection of a large amount of symbolic capital which can be converted into economic capital (1993 p. 40-58).

In Bourdieu's empirical studies, at the top end (the large-scale/heteronomous end) of the pole is dramatic literature and at the bottom end (the small-scale/ autonomous end) is poetry (1993 p. 39).

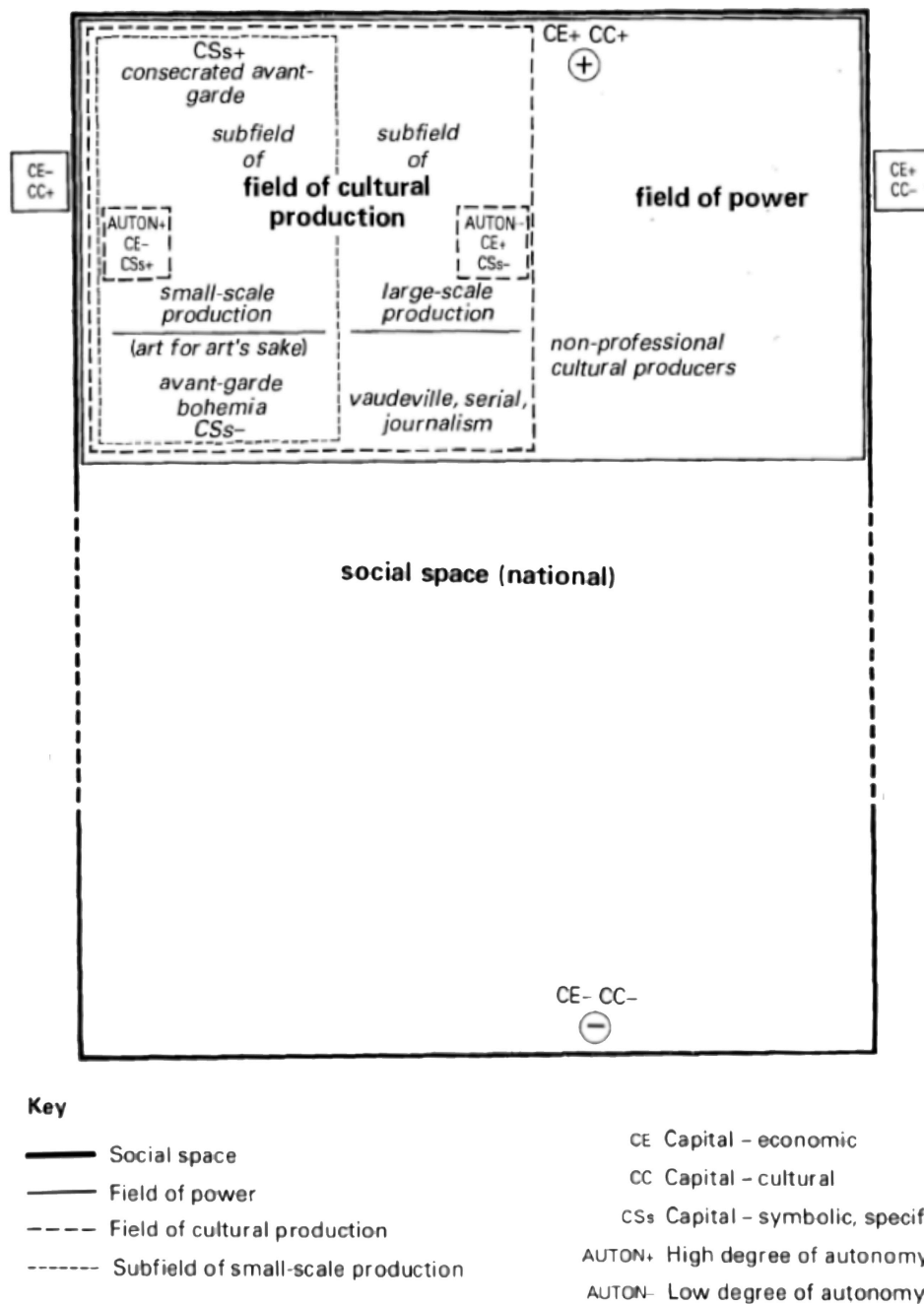


Figure 3. The field of cultural production in the field of power and in social space

Fig. 3 Bourdieu 'The Rules of Art' 1996 p. 124

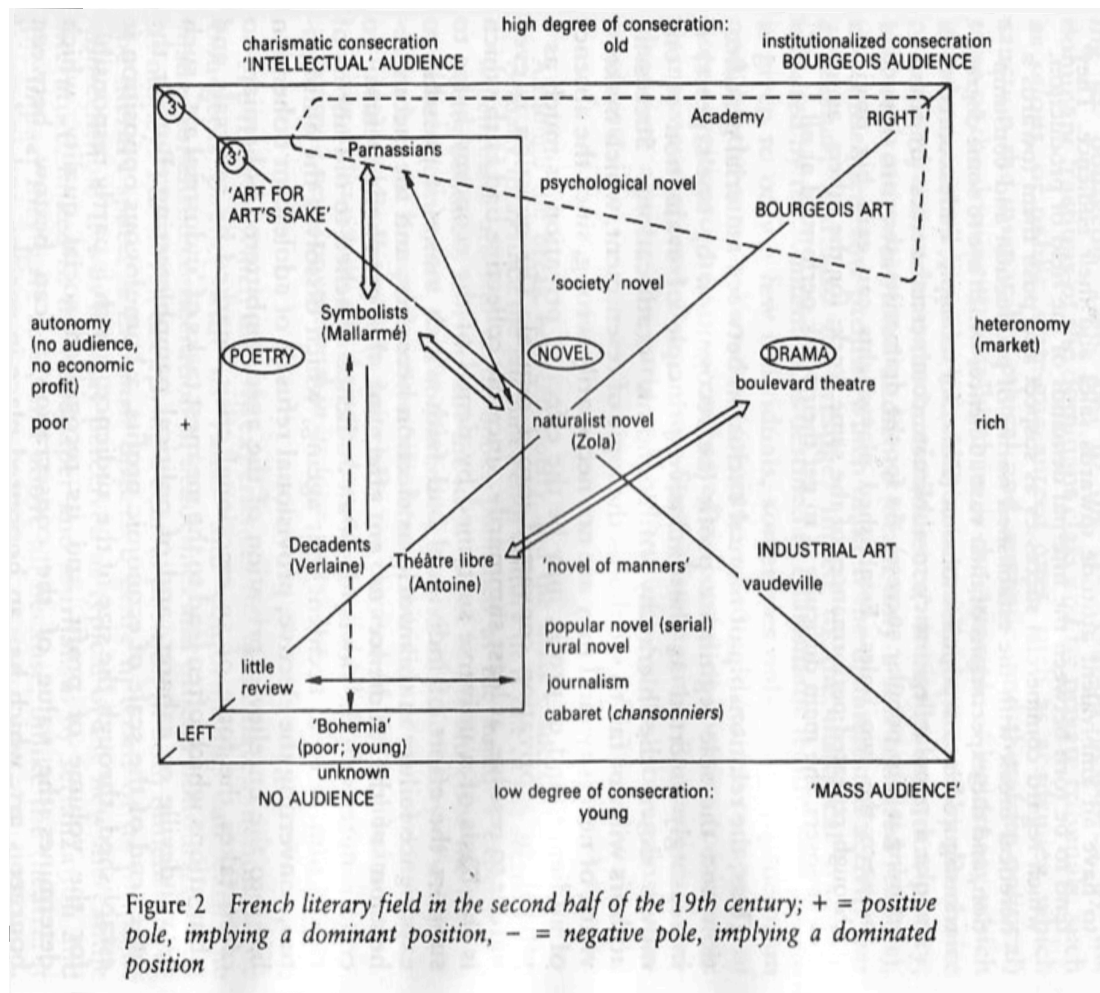


Fig. 4 Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production' 1993 p. 49

In effect, the credit attached to any cultural practice tends to decrease with the numbers and especially the social spread of the audience, because the value of the credit of recognition ensured by consumption decreases when the specific competence recognised in the consumer decreases (and even tends to change sign when it descends below a certain threshold) (Bourdieu 1996, p. 115).

These studies also build on Bourdieu's concept of 'disinterestedness' where creators remain ambivalent towards critical perceptions of, or the generation of economic capital through, their works. Bourdieu (1993, 1996) also claims that the field of small-scale production is generally dominated by new producers, whereas large-scale

production is dominated by producers that have been participating in the field of production for a longer time.

Howard Becker's Art Worlds

Becker (2008/1982) provides a sociological study of the role of art worlds in the generation and creation of art works. He argues that '[a]ll artistic work, like all human activity, involves joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the artwork we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be' (Becker 2008/1982 p. 1).

In opposition to many views of the artist as a lone genius, Becker argues that rarely is anything considered art which is generated by a sole creator. Rather, the artist plays a central role in an art world which facilitates the artist's work by providing materials, manual labor, aesthetic principals, finance, legal frameworks, and the distribution networks required for their work to exist. Becker identifies Bourdieu as a key influence but seeks to expand on Bourdieu's concept of Habitus and its role in the production of art. Using a bricolage of sociological research, historical examples and experiential data, Becker illustrates the ways in which an artwork is supported by a network of people and a series of principles. He is 'more concerned with the patterns of cooperation among the people who make the works than the works themselves' (Becker 2008/1982 p. ix).

One of a number of examples Becker provides is the T.S. Elliot poem 'Death By Water' and the significant role the editing played in the production of the work. Becker compares the original first draft to the final edit, pointing out that many of the outstanding elements of the poem, were, in fact, the work of the editor not Elliot (2008/1982 p 192). Key to this thesis is Becker's detailed discussion of aesthetics. He argues that aesthetic principles underpin large parts of the 'art world' because what is judged to be legitimate art is based upon principles developed in the field: what is judged to be "art" in any particular field is a function of the principles developed historically within that field (2008/1982 p. 131). He argues that:

‘Most participants in art worlds make aesthetic judgments frequently. Aesthetic principles, arguments, and judgments make up an important part of the body of conventions by means of which the members of art worlds act together’ (2008/1982 p. 131).

This is certainly apparent within the three case studies provided in this thesis.

Bennett’s Music Scenes

Peterson and Bennett (2004 p. 1) edit a publication of qualitative studies which examine a number of diverse subfields of musical production, including dance, punk, and teeny bop scenes. Within their study the concept of “field” is named using a terminology that emerged in music journalism—music scenes. They define a music scene as a space for the ‘production, performance and reception of popular music’ (2004 p3). Bennett notes that the industrial end of the music industry needs these scenes as harvesting grounds for music that appears authentic (2004 p. 3). Bennett’s formulation of the concept of scene relies heavily on Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984) and Becker’s *Art Worlds* (1982). While acknowledging that each scene is unique, Peterson and Bennett use distinctions to describe the various types of scene in terms of their relation to local geography (2004 p. 6). Bennett uses the term ‘Local Scene’ to describe a music scene clustered around a geographic focus (Bennett et al. 2004 p7). ‘Translocal Scene’ describes a scene that operates in such a way that is in regular contact with other scenes—through the exchange of music, fans, and ‘fanzines’. ‘Virtual Scene’ describes more modern phenomena made possible by the Internet in which scenes develop in online spaces such as fan forums around particular music forms or artists (2004 pp. 11-12).

Bennett et al. (2004) include a number of ethnographic studies of each scene type conducted by 15 independent researchers with expertise in their particular subgenre such as ‘Riot Grrrl’, ‘Teeny Bopper’, or ‘Anarcho-Punk’. These scenes are then categorised as a particular scene type: Local, Translocal or Virtual. A number of the studies presented in Peterson and Bennett’s volume draw on methods of ‘insider ethnography’ (Drew 2004, Hodkinson 2004, Spring 2004, Urquiza 2004) in particular,

Ken Spring's (2004) study of the Ruston Rave scene provides an example of a case study that mainly relies on insider experiential knowledge, much like the case studies in this thesis.

Small-scale production in the music industries

Hesmondhalgh (1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1998 and 1999) is a key theorist of small-scale musical production and its relationship to the large-scale industry. His earlier examinations of small-scale music production were undertaken before he had identified an issue with the use of the term 'independent' or 'indie' (1996a, 1996b). He later identifies the issues with the use of these terminologies and uses Bourdieu's (1993) framework as a means to separate the field into competing sub-fields of cultural production. Hesmondhalgh (1999 p38-39) suggests that many of the earlier examples of small-scale production changed and merged with cooperative production to give birth to the so-called 'indie labels'. He proposes that this was due the decline of the post-punk movement in the 1980s (1999 p. 38-39).

Hesmondhalgh (1998) tracks the development of an alternative punk scene and its ability to circumvent the established music industry. Initially, he argues, punk music engaged with the major labels signing deals with established businesses such as CBS and EMI. However, another field of production within punk music saw this as a negative move. The counter-cultural punks set up co-operative labels, the most discussed example being Rough Trade (1998 p. 257). Alongside other small-scale labels, Rough Trade initially set up outside the major label system (1998 p. 259). Hesmondhalgh examines Rough Trade's initial success and eventual failure. Rough Trade's deals were seen as extremely artist-friendly, giving it an appeal to independent-minded artists. Artists were given much more creative autonomy but, with costs and profits usually split evenly between the label and the artists, future investment in their music was limited (1998 p. 268). Furthermore, internal disagreements coupled with the label's democratic structure caused the company to fracture. Lastly, the label made a number of mistakes in business planning and the record store component of the label began to experience direct competition from corporate record chain stores (1998 p. 269).

Hesmondhalgh (1998) summarises his research into independent labels and argues that the success of such labels can be summarised as having the following factors:

1. The setting up of alternative distribution networks which allowed the artists to reach a wider audience than previously possible. This provided paid creative work to practitioners who were previously unable to participate in the field of cultural production.
2. This 'institutional intervention' was achieved through a 'more reflexive understanding' (p. 37) of the music industry. This commitment to independence allowed for a more democratic industry by empowering artists.
3. Independents exported their content widely, engaging overseas audiences through relationships with international specialist stores.
4. Unskilled practitioners were encouraged to engage with the industry, breaking down the barriers for entry into the cultural marketplace.

Hesmondhalgh often examines small-scale production where the direction—or part of the direction—of a company is dictated by artists. However he does not acknowledge a difference between artist-run small-scale production and other small-scale producers as this thesis does.

Strachan (2003) explores the discourses surrounding the emergence of a relatively new phenomenon that he terms as 'micro-independent labels'. His definition of micro-independent mirrors my own in many ways. However, the scope of his research includes many labels that are operated by philanthropists who love music, but who are not necessarily artists themselves. Strachan (2003, 2007) uses Bourdieu's (1993) framework for his theoretical arguments surrounding key motivations for the development of semi-autonomous record labels. He suggests that micro-labels have emerged as part of a new field of power in the music industry and use similar business models to that of the major labels. He also argues that some micro-labels act in opposition to the discourses of capitalism, actively criticising the methods of mainstream industry and its subsidiary independent labels (2007 p. 6). However, Strachan suggests that micro-labels are inevitably compromised and need to engage with established music industry networks in order to remain financially

sustainable. Therefore they are only semi-autonomous as opposed to a genuine oppositional force outside of the industry) (2007 p. 5).

O'Connor (2008) interviews fifty-three DIY Punk record labels in the USA, four in Spain, and four in Canada. He describes DIY labels as semi-autonomous, usually selling between 1000 and 3000 records. O'Connor (2008) also draws on Bourdieu (1993, 1996) and his concepts of scale to describe DIY punk labels, classifying the major labels as large-scale production and the DIY punk labels as small-scale production (2008 p. 16). O'Connor is embedded in the practice and describes his difficulty in drawing broad conclusions in his study as 'a sociology of punk must map its actual diversity' (2008 p. 15). He notes a shift from the small-scale field to the large-scale field as crucial to the viability of artists in more autonomous fields of practice because it is required to expose their genre (in this case punk) to a much wider audience (2008 p. 22).

The Internet, Piracy, and the changing ecology of the music industry.

The importance of the Internet and how it has affected the music industry both culturally and economically cannot be understated. There have been many studies of the effect of peer-to-peer file sharing on the music industry (cf Alexander 2002; Lantagne 2004; Leyshon, Webb et al. 2005; Oberholzer-Gee and Stumpf 2007; Dahl 2009 amongst others). These articles track the major labels' failure to comprehend with the technological advances in music distribution caused by the domestication of the Internet. Consumers began taking matters into their own hands through the use of file sharing networks. The inability of the major labels to adapt to an emerging market in the early part of the 21st century led to an increased number of 'misplaced investments' decreasing the dominance of these corporations and their profitability (Leyshon, Webb et al. 2005 p. 177).

As stated by Lantagne (2004) and Alexander (2002), rather than attempting to compete with the emerging illegal market, labels litigated, first against colleges and universities whose students had the earliest mass access to fast internet technologies, and soon afterwards against the networks that distributed pirated content. Lantagne notes that when this failed to cause any significant decrease in illegal file-sharing the

major labels then started filing against individual downloaders in an attempt to scare the public into compliance (2004 pp. 284-286). Neither of these efforts has been effective in preventing illegal downloading because the Internet is a space that 'grew up with few rules' and its users express an anarchistic set of values (Lantagne 2004 p281). The negative publicity for the labels, generated by what was perceived as unfair attacks on individuals by powerful corporations, also had negative effects upon sales and consumer relations.

Lantagne notes that it is very difficult to convince music fans that downloading music illegally is the same as stealing a CD (2004 p. 282). Aside from illegal file sharing, Leyshon et al. discuss another aspect affecting music sales, and therefore traditional music business models: new competitors in the entertainment economy such as computer games and mobile phones who aim their product at the music industry's largest market—teenagers and young adults (2005 p. 181). Lantagne (2004) also argues that the established music businesses failed to realise that, other than providing music for free, these illegal networks were meeting consumer demands as they offered a large body of music that was instantly available to the consumer in the domestic environment.

New media

In 1995 Mark Poster coined the term 'second media age' (1995 p. 3) to describe a decentralised, multidimensional media environment that is the result of an increasing speed and domestication of the Internet. Beer (2004) takes up Poster's concept to examine the new media environment using solo musician Jarvis Cocker as the centerpiece of his study. Beer's study of Cocker centres around Cocker's success with an early Myspace platform and argues that the need for intermediaries had been greatly reduced by the newly emerging social media (2004). Beer (2006) takes this approach further to examine how new online communities are emerging which operate somewhat like a geographically based music scene. He argues that the end of the BBC *Top of The Pops* television series, which ran for 42 years, marked a more significant change in the music industry (2006). Beer suggests that the cancellation of this series, along with the previous reduction of its audience from almost 7 million to 1 million, signified the arrival of the 'second media age' (2006). Beer notes that

consumers can now watch niche content where and whenever they want to, significantly reducing the dominance of established mainstream entertainment businesses. These changes in the media have affected the recording and distribution of music in a number of ways which I discuss more fully in Chapter 3.

Artist-Run Organisations

The above studies into small-scale in music industry production are the leading research in the field, however they do not separate artist-run organisations from other small-scale producers. In the case of the fine arts or visual arts the importance of artist-run organisations and their role in the development of new art and the nurturing of emerging talent has been identified by a limited number of researchers (Sharon 1979; Wheeler 2003; Robertson 2004; Byrne, Carroll et al. 2006; Heagney 2007; Tremblay and Pilati 2007; Keeley 2008; Bijloos 2009; Blessi, Sacco et al. 2011). These researchers all conclude that artist-run organisations are highly important to the production of culture and the development of local and artistic communities. Wheeler suggests a cross-pollination between visual art, performance art, and DIY (do it yourself) punk music (2003 pp. 498-499, 501). Heagney's description of the 'rebellious overtones' that fuel some of the artist-run organisations in Melbourne certainly mirrors the description of small-scale punk scenes mentioned above (2007 p. 18). As yet a direct link between artist run organisations and small-scale music businesses does not appear to have been established in academic literature, although John Held Jr. (2012) makes a good argument for a direct lineage from Dada to small-scale punk scenes via performance art in his published non-academic essay 'From Dada To DIY – The Rise Of Alternative Cultures in the Twenty First Century'. It is for this reason I have taken an interdisciplinary approach to my literature review, with an examination of the literature surrounding artist-run organisations across relevant disciplines.

In the visual arts field, Heagney et al. (2006) note that artist-run organisations take many different forms. They may approximate a traditional gallery space or present works in a unique way (2006 p. 12). Byrne et al. (2006) examine artist-run organisations in Ireland and suggest that they developed as a response to the dissatisfaction with established galleries and outlets for artists in the 1970s in Ireland.

Byrne, Carroll et al. (2006 p. 32) suggest that collective creativity leads to more innovative works, and that artist-run spaces can contribute to the artist's income through the marketing and presentation of the artist's work. One weakness identified is that the Irish artist-run organisations studied tended not to have a curatorial policy (Byrne, Carroll et al. 2006 p. 33). On the other hand Bijloos (2009) studies artist-run spaces in Istanbul and links the development of these spaces with an overall liberalisation of Turkish culture that began with the ending of the military regime.

Blessi, Sacco et al. (2006) study not-for-profit artist-run centers in Montreal, their research suggesting that these locations are transitional spaces for artists to develop their work. They note that once an artist achieves commercial success he or she tends to move on from the space, suggesting that such spaces are used mainly as places of development and practice early in an artist's career.

Sharon (1979) examines the increasing independence of artists in the San Francisco and Santa Cruz areas of California. The study documents the contemporary phenomenon of artists who create their own galleries and become their own gatekeepers, giving them a direct relationship with their audience. Sharon finds that the role and operational structure of the artist-run gallery is similar to any other gallery except for the fact that the space is artist-run (1979 p. 5). Whether run by an individual artist or a collective of artists, the galleries remove the need for an intermediary art dealer (1979 p. 6). Sharon states one of the key motivators for the establishment of artist-run galleries is access, as the barriers for entry to commercial institutions are much higher (1979 pp. 6-7).

Despite the politics and outcomes of artist-run organisations being highly dependent on their locality, there are some common conclusions made by the researchers into artist-run organisations. Common threads identified include the incidence that the spaces provide an entry level environment for self-determination, allowing artists to develop work outside the more rigid gallery system—usually at very low rents and with shared equipment costs (Sharon 1979; Byrne, Carroll et al. 2006; Tremblay and Pilati 2007; Keeley 2008; Bijloos 2009; Blessi, Sacco et al. 2011). There is also much commentary on the importance of artist-run organisations in the development of new art forms and works that would not be supported by the established gallery

system (Sharon 1979 p10; Byrne, Carroll et al. 2006 p10; Keeley 2008 p ii, iii, 2, 5, 20,130). Florida's (2002) frequently cited research suggests that the creative entrepreneur wants to live in a vibrant cultural city where large amounts of economic activity take place around artist-run businesses and their audiences. This co-location of artistic endeavour with economic activity brands a place as a 'cool city' that can attract new businesses and the creative classes because highly educated workers prefer to live in culturally vibrant cities, although whether such trends benefit artists in any way is not commented on.

Studies of Brisbane and Queensland Music

The first published academic study of the Brisbane music scene was undertaken by Stafford (2006). *Pig City* examines Brisbane music's ecology and its place within music history. It chronicles Brisbane as a site for the development of a number of musical genres and performance groups, some with international commercial success. Stafford examines the role which the isolation of the city and its turbulent political history played in shaping the subcultures from which emerged a number of internationally successful acts such as The Saints, The Go-Betweens, and Savage Garden. Due to its wide appeal, Stafford's *Pig City* has become a central text outside academia about Brisbane music scenes, both as historiography and as a key text identifying Brisbane as a musical site of significance.

Rogers et al. (2004) examine Brisbane music industries using a hybrid methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches. They identify a two-tier network, the first tier being major record labels and large profitable music businesses and the second tier being small-scale do-it-yourself 'grassroots micro economies' (2004 p. 4). They show that '[t]he majority of Queensland's music sector operates at the second tier and is largely the domain of the independent musician' (p. 24). Although these two tiers do interact somewhat, for the most part their operations are very different. Rogers et al. examine allied institutions and industries (such as live venues, community radio, labels, music retailers) that play a support role in the small-scale scene's ability to operate without the help of established, large-scale industrial concerns. They argue that Brisbane is not seen as a core site for music production by

major labels but note the size, vibrancy, and collective economic scale of the second-tier, “independent” activity in music production.

Rogers (2008) explores the ‘indie’ music scene in Brisbane in a time of rapid cultural and socio-economical change. He discusses the geographical isolation of Brisbane and how this isolation restricts the ambitions of some independent musicians. Rogers concludes that the majority of independent musicians in Brisbane play gigs for the purposes of raising cultural rather than economic capital. However, on this point, and in his discussion of the ‘hobbyist’ musician, Rogers neglects to further investigate the face value claims of his respondents about their commercial ambitions. As Bourdieu notes, cultural capital can by definition be converted to economic capital (1993 pp. 40-58).

Conclusions

Examinations of artist-run, small-scale cultural production cover highly diverse and often idiosyncratic ground. However, there are broadly common threads apparent in the literature:

1. These modes of production are directed by individuals who see themselves in opposition to the dominant aesthetic and economic paradigms of their field.
2. The literature about small-scale production in the music industry is extensive. However, as yet there does not appear to be broad-based research into the role of ‘artist as business owner’ in the music industry.
3. The majority of the studies in this area have been undertaken by researchers who are ‘outside ethnographers’ (etic). They are not immersed in the day-to-day routine of the production of small-scale music as I have been for the past 10 years. Consequently the studies are reliant on ‘etically’ constructed interviews, broad statistical surveys, and secondary data to formulate their conclusions.
4. Although culturally and economically important, and identified as one of the most vibrant scenes in the world (Eliezer 2007; Rogers 2008 p. 643; Stafford 2006 pp. 2-5), research into Brisbane’s music scene is lacking in detail about the operation and organisation of the many micro businesses that comprise its ‘second tier’ of music production (Rogers et al. 2004).

Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) concept of capital, combined with his useful categorisation of large and small scale art, provides a robust framework that underpins much of the research in the general area of cultural production. Bourdieu's theoretical perspective usefully permits the investigation of links between seemingly isolated artistic producers, major cultural and economic institutions, and the wider economy. With an understanding that music is always part of a "scene" (Peterson and Bennet, 2004), and that such scenes are potential candidates for large scale commercialisation, the need to see the participants in this study as important agents involved in a complex ecology becomes clear (Rogers et al., 2004). While there is ample literature examining artist-led businesses in the world of visual art, this literature can only be helpful to research on music to a limited degree. Simply, the issues are very different and the production processes typically more complex in terms of music requiring collaboration; often large-scale capital (recording studios, rehearsal rooms, frequent transport); and having an essentially ephemeral, time-based product.

The issues confronting small-scale music production on an industry wide are manifold. They include: the 'gentrification' of inner-city spaces; changes in legislation on gambling, smoking, noise, and drink driving; fragmented mass audiences; and changes to State and National arts funding rules (Gibson and Homan 2003). None of these, however, has had as profound and far-reaching effects for all parts of the music industry as those associated with the rise of digital media (Poster, 1995). While new media and its implications for the music industry most certainly provides part of the background to this study, the data I present below shows that issues of new media are far less important to them where the viability of their businesses is concerned. Surprisingly, on a small-scale (at least within these studies), local factors, contribute far more to the viability of an operation than do issues to do with digital media.

Chapter 3

Contextual Review

The current ecology of the recording industry, and how we got here.

“...[H]e said, ‘but the deal is you get famous and we get rich’” (Tom Cooney Personal Communication 03/05/2013).

The previous chapter outlines the literature relevant to this thesis and identifies the contribution to research this thesis seeks to make. In doing so it has covered some of the background and history of the music industry as they affect this field of cultural production. This chapter examines the changing avenues that small-scale producers have to promote and distribute their music. It track the diminishing dominance of the 20th Century music industries due to the development of online technologies and reduced costs of recording. In explaining these developments in the industry It also outline the historical use of ‘indie’ and ‘independent’ and the difficulties surrounding this genre description.

The beginning of major labels and ‘independent’ labels

From the rise of Rock and Roll and its parallel teenage culture during the 1950s to the mid-2000s, major labels dominated the recorded music distribution channels. Alongside the mass music industries, many musical sub-cultures arose as did small-scale labels. These labels were classified by the industry as ‘independent’ – later ‘indie’ for short. However, in order to maintain profitability, most successful independents were eventually absorbed into a relationship of dependency with the major labels driven by the need to access global distribution networks. By the mid-2000s 85-90% of the music industry was dominated by the ‘big five’ corporations (EMI, Sony, Universal-Vivendi, Time Warner and Bertelsmann BMG) (Garfalo 1987 pp. 80).

The first so-called ‘independent’ labels were mainly operated by lone entrepreneurs. Their advantage over the corporations was their intimate connection with local music

and culture. The ‘independent’ labels were responsible for championing more radical acts, whereas major labels relied on established forms of music to generate capital (Garfalo 1987 pp. 80). These smaller labels may have been more radical in their signings, but the recording deals they offered in most cases were similar to, or the same as those of the majors (Hesmondhalgh 1996).

The emergence of semi-autonomous networks

Part of the 1970s punk music movement included a political attempt to decentralise the industry and challenge established music corporations by operating semi-autonomous networks and actively shunning the established networks of major and the so called ‘independent’ labels associated with them (Hesmondhalgh 1997). One of the earliest examples of these semi-autonomous groups in the music industry was the ‘Crass Collective’. Led by music group ‘Crass’, the co-op was initially successful in recording, pressing and distributing their own music. However they followed the path of many before them and were ultimately unsuccessful in their original goals: eventually they engaged with capitalism and became economically quite successful (Thompson 2004)!

Many punk networks attempted to mirror the Crass Collective’s experiment. However, before the domestication of the Internet and the subsequent ease of distribution it facilitates, resisting the hegemony of the major labels and their smaller ‘independent’ sub divisions was almost impossible (Holtzman 2003; Azerrad 2001). Once again, many of the industry networks they opposed either supported them and capitalised on their products or drove them out of the market (Thompson 2004). One such example, discussed above, was Rough Trade, a semi-autonomous Punk record store and label that established itself in the UK. For a while it managed to organise

‘The Cartel, an independent distribution network built around the alliance of London-based Rough Trade and Small Wonder with its regional counterparts Probe, Revolver and Red Rhino. Nationwide distribution for small labels and self-released records held out the possibility for real communication: reaching a scattered

audience of like-minded individuals, recouping your costs, carrying on' (Reynolds 2006, Kindle Loc: 2359).

However, as reported by Hesmondhalgh (1997 pp. 266-267), due to financial issues the label faced—caused mainly by internal debates—eventually the label arm of Rough Trade filed for bankruptcy in 1991.

In 1998 Hesmondhalgh explored another semi-autonomous ecology of music—the UK dance music industry—which first emerged in the early 1980s. He noted a 'decentralisation' of the UK music recording and distribution industry largely due to the reduction of production costs, and the requirement for audience participation in dance music. Many decentralised semi-autonomous scenes arose in the UK in the 1980s, mainly in regional capitals and university towns. This is similar to the punk networks I mention above. However the small-scale dance discotheques and networks of independent record stores which supported these scenes were more autonomous than those of the punk movement because they required less support from traditional recording studios and distribution companies. Often these record stores also ran 'independent' labels that supported the scene's music production and distribution. In this case the major labels' ability to dominate was diminished somewhat (Hesmondhalgh, 1998 pp. 236-237).

Perhaps for the first time in modern music history these artists had true control over the means of production. More importantly, their distribution networks were able to operate sustainably without the help or interference of the established industry networks, though in some cases parts of this scene were harvested by the major and 'independent' labels (Hesmondhalgh 1998 p. 259).

Despite many of these small-scale labels losing the political and economical battles in which they were engaged, they provided models for subversion of the mainstream networks and remain an inspiration for small-scale labels today. Due to the domestication of the Internet, today's economic and social environment provides small-scale practitioners with tools and avenues which make them far more capable of competing with major and 'indie' record labels. Furthermore the costs of

recording and distribution have also been reduced immensely (Strachan 2003; Knowles 2007; Held 2011).

The use of indie and independent as a marketing terminology.

In the periods outlined above, the use of the term 'indie' or 'independent' usually, to a degree, denoted a smaller scale business model or at least a more intimate relationship with the scene, albeit at times partnered with a major distributor. However, the genre indie has since been further commercialised and diluted. The historical facts surrounding the rise of indie as a popular genre are largely under-researched in academic literature. There are a number of journalistic accounts of this transition. Of particular significance is the BBC 2 documentary series *Seven Ages of Rock: Episode 6 - Left of the Dial* (Barfield, Gravelle et al. 2007), Craig Mathieson's (2000) study of the commercialisation of Australian Indie music, and Michael Azerrad's (2001) study of the emergence of the Northern American underground music as a popular genre.

Azerrad (2001 p. 1-4), Mathieson (2000 p. 3, 72), and Barfield et al. (2007) all place significance on the band Nirvana as the first band to have emerged from small-scale production into large-scale popular culture, thus historically marking 'indie' as a popular genre. In the 1990s this led to major labels signing other previously small-scale acts and musicians, and buying controlling shares in independent labels, therefore signifying that "indie" music was now a serious economic investment for labels rather than a niche genre supported by a smaller labels and a subcultural scene (Azerrad 2001; Mathieson 2000; Barfield Gravelle et al. 2007).

Furthermore, within the 'indie' genre, the appearance of opposition to mainstream commercialism is also key to the marketing of its musical products. An example of this can be seen when the Sony signed the band 'Oasis': Sony went to great lengths to camouflage the band as if it were still being released by 'indie' label Creation (which was now 49% Sony owned). This marketing method which involves imitating the 'indie' aesthetic and the appearance of autonomy is used by many major labels to market music. The concept of 'indie' is further confused by the marketing methods used in the post-90s field of musical production (Strachan 2003, p. 59).

The rise of the Internet and the changing economic and technological landscape from the 90s till the present.

‘The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society’ (Marx, 1848)

At the same time as indie was emerging as a popular genre, the economic environment began to change with the domestication of the Internet. The Internet affected many industries including the music industry. Prof. Krugman describes the economic environment before the domestication of the Internet as ‘socialism without the justice’ (2008 p. 24). The advent of the information age changed the economic landscape across nearly all industries.

‘As in the nineteenth century, the economic story became one of remarkable individuals: of men (and, at least occasionally, women) who had a better idea, developed it in their garage or on their kitchen table, and struck it rich. Business magazines actually became interesting to read; and business success came to seem admirable, in a way that it hadn’t for more than a century’ (Krugman, 2008 p. 24).

With the Internet in the home environment, an era of cheap and uncontrolled distribution, which any practitioner could plug into as long as they had access to a computer, had emerged. Hegemony had previously been achieved by the established record labels not simply by cohesion, but also because the major labels succeeded in strategically reframing all competing definitions such as the previous example of ‘indie’ (Hebdige, 1979 p. 15).

Soon after the domestication of the Internet, members of the Moving Picture Experts Group developed a highly efficient compression algorithm fostering portable file

sizes for the average music file: the MPEG 2 Audio Layer III, more commonly known as the “mp3” (Grill and Quackenbush 2006).

The technology allowed for the file to be a much smaller in size while (debatably) offering an acceptable quality of sound. This facilitated the rapid exchange of music files. The ease of distribution brought forward another rapid change in the roles of the entertainment distributors and producers (Alexander 2002, p. 151). The need for intermediaries (i.e. the record store) was also reduced due to online trading sites such as Amazon and eBay (Graham, Burnes et al. 2004, p. 4).

Along with these new distribution technologies, recording technologies reduced in price significantly (and are continuing to reduce). This led to the production of high quality recordings in the home environment, further reducing the barriers for entry into the recording and distribution industries (Rogers et al. 2004, p. 5, 10). These developments caused a shift within the music industry, as opposed to the waves of decentralisation followed by recentralisation experienced historically, the Internet and new cheaper home recording technology facilitated an era of rapid decentralisation where the ability of major labels to dominate was severely reduced (Leyshon, Webb et al. 2005, pp. 195).

In contrast to this new era of cheap and easy distribution and ‘do-it-yourself’ recording technologies, the rise of the Internet affected the traditional industry networks with a sharp decline in album sales. This was the result of an increase in the illegal sharing of copyrighted music and legal online streaming from websites such as MySpace and YouTube (Leyshon et al. 2005 p. 179). Many consumers at the time felt no moral issue with downloading as CDs were felt to be priced ‘unjustifiably high’ (Lantagne 2004 p. 279).

The mounting pressures have affected the major labels market position, which in turn is causing a restructuring of traditional music business models (Graham et al. 2004). The major and independent labels have restructured themselves in order to save capital as their ability to monetise their product has been significantly decreased. This has led to a series of acquisitions and mergers, leading to a reduced number of staff, many of whom have homogenised skill sets. These small cohorts have been left

to represent an increasing number of acts, while their former colleagues are acting as specialists who subcontract music services to artists and artist managers, thus giving small-scale operations access to the same methods as the majors (Bennet et al. 2004 p8, Burns 2007 p. 4). Parallel to these improvements in the ability of artists to self-publish, these issues have also led to a new recording deal which is now commonly offered by ‘independent’ and major labels, deals that give the artist even less (when compared to a history of very small commissions) of a share of their income in return for label support.

Part 4 The Rise of the ‘360’ Deal.

‘[T]his is the only industry in which, after you pay off the mortgage, the bank still owns the house’ (Orrin cited in Breretons 2010 p. 167).

Many different kinds of recording deals have been available throughout the recorded music industries’ relatively short history. In summarising these I have organised the range under the following categories: contract for services, contract for master recordings, tape lease, manufacture and distribution deal (P&D deal) and most recently, due to the disruptions in the industry, a new deal—the ‘360’ deal—is being offered to artists (Hutchison et al. 2010; Simpson 2006 pp. 360-394). It should be also noted that historically some radical independent labels have offered a 50/50 deal (where the label and the artists split the profits and costs accordingly). However, generally, these deals have proved unsuccessful and the label required to adapt one of the options above in order to maintain economic viability (Hesmondhalgh 1997, p. 261; Strachan 2003, p. 55).

The contract for services continues to be a deal offered to bands where the label wants a large amount of control over the product. The label is also generally willing to invest a larger amount of money into the act than with the other deals. Pre-internet, this was the deal most commonly offered to artists as it gave the label the control it needed to market the product and give the artist the backing needed to make a big impact. The model was based on an advance/recoupment finance structure, meaning the label would outlay all the initial costs, but expect to recoup them before paying

the artist their royalty from sales of the record. In this case the label retains the copyright of the recordings and the original works (Simpson 2006, pp. 360-379).

The tape lease deal is similar to the direct signing deal except that the artist generally pays for and delivers the recordings and keeps the copyright in the recordings. The advance and recoupment model remains the same, as does the exclusivity of the deal (Hutchison et al. 2010). With the manufacturing and distribution deal (P&D deal) the artists' work is developed and produced by the artist and is licensed to be pressed and distributed by a company—the artist owns and controls all the creative work. Generally this P&D deal and the 360 deal are the most common in today's market (Breretons 2009; Hutchison, Macy et al. 2010; Simpson 2006, pp. 386-395)

The P&D deal allows the artist(s) the most creative freedom, as the record label licenses the finished product (a single, EP or LP), from the artist(s) for a negotiated percentage. In this case usually the musical act is required to deliver a finished product to the label at their own expense, however due to this the act normally receives a much larger percentage than in the 'contract for services' deal (Simpson 2006 pp. 396-405). In the interviews for this thesis, this recording deal, and the 360 deal were the most commonly referred to.

The 360 deal is a relatively new offer to musicians, and has the most in common with the direct signing deal, except that the label also takes a percentage of all other streams of income and offers a more hands on approach to the management of the artist (Breretons 2010). The advance and recoupment deals are traditionally not very lucrative for the artist. These deals usually offer the artist less than 10% of the profits from record sales and varying percentages of other income streams, including merchandise (T-shirts, posters, etc) and live performance revenue. Breretons (2010) argues that most of the clauses in the 'direct sign' family are so favorable to the label that they are probably voidable in a court of law due to their inherent unconscionability.

Lantagne (2004) notes that a savvy music consumer is aware of these deals and the percentage which the major and independent labels take from the product and therefore are more than happy to compensate the artist for their hard work, while at

the same time they resent the percentage the industry takes from the product. There is much evidence in the field for this compensatory attitude, seen in the example that, despite the reduction in CD sales, there has been a large increase in concert attendance (2004 p. 279-280).

Conclusions

My contextual review highlights the many and rapid changes that have affected the recorded music market. It has been affected by challenges from political and economic movements internal and external to its operation. We can also conclude that, generally, for industry to maintain profitability it must put the economic and creative needs of the artist second to its own – for such massive industries, the artist is both a necessary raw material and productive labour. This general necessity is exacerbated by the many issues emerging from the domestication of the Internet.

Lastly that the small-scale and autonomous legacy of the post-punk scenes of the 1970s has led to a 'set of increasingly autonomous institutions, running in parallel to the mainstream rock industry: networks of retail and distribution, independent sales charts and a relatively decentralised set of small labels' (Hesmondhalgh, 1996 pp. 89). In the following chapters I offer three cases studies of Brisbane based small-scale music businesses.

‘...Renouncing the angelic belief in a pure interest in pure form is the price we must pay for understanding the logic of those social universes which, through the social alchemy of their historical laws of functioning, succeed in extracting from the often merciless clash of passions and selfish interests the sublimated essence of the universal. It is to offer a vision more true and, ultimately, more reassuring, because less superhuman, of the highest achievements of the human enterprise’ (Bourdieu 1996, p. xx).

El Niño El Niño

Background

Company Type: Partnership

Business Partners: Denny Ryan and Tom Cooney

Active Members: Denny Ryan, Helen Franzman and Tom Cooney

Studied January 2011-December 2012

Operation: All roles within the business are shared equally, the business is egalitarian and there is no hierarchy. Ryan is a mixed media artist who often helps to develop film clips for his artists and Cooney has a degree in Economics and International Business. Consequently he has a greater economic vision for the business. However, overall these roles are *ad hoc* and change depending on the circumstances that the businesses faces.

Method of data collection:

1. Experiential knowledge from participation in the scene and regular attendance of events from 2007-2013, including a number of qualitative observational periods, drawing on methods used in 'participant observation'.
2. Formal qualitative observation and semi-structured interviews with three participants: Denny Ryan, Helen Franzmann and Tom Cooney. From January 2012–June 2013.

This chapter tracks the formation and evolution of creative arts company, El Niño El Niño, and how it became the umbrella operation it is today. Furthermore, based on my final interview with Tom Cooney, it makes inferences about the future of the business. I consider this case study to be based upon some of the principles outlined as ‘participant as observer’ (Gold 1958 p. 217), as at times my observations were limited and much of the supporting evidence has been obtained from interviews with the partners and my informal conversations with Helen Franzmann. The business owners and Helen Franzmann do not spend a significant amount of their resources promoting the business, for this reason there are no media studies of the business and no academic studies. According to the participants I am the first to study their business—despite what I have experienced to be its long-standing prominence in the Brisbane small-scale ‘indie’ music scene.

The working methods for this business ran parallel to the domestic lives of Helen Franzmann and Denny Ryan who are in a *de facto* relationship with two young children. Ryan would look after the children whilst Franzmann folded vinyl cases and posted the orders in the mail. As Cooney has been living in Europe for the last three years, I was unable to observe his participation other than through third hand accounts regarding conversations and emails which Franzmann and Ryan disclosed. However Cooney was very forthcoming about his vision for the business and in answering the interview questions. On the other hand both Franzmann and Ryan have personalities that are quite introverted, many of their answers to the interview questions were thoughtful but quite short. At times during the interviews they struggled to define their ethos and motivations—from my observations I believe that this may be because their focus is creativity rather than any economic or social benefit regarding their work.

The key conclusions for this chapter come from my informal conversations with Franzmann. Towards the end of this study our friendship had advanced and I was able to consult her about her views of the label, often over coffee while her two young children played at our feet. It was during these times (without my recording device on) that I felt I received the best clarifications of my observations. These assertions are also based on my extensive time as a participant in the Brisbane small-

scale scene—as such I have been familiar with Franzmann and Cooney’s work for nearly a decade. They both have been central artists within the Brisbane ‘indie’ small-scale.

Due to my earlier observations of the business, and my discussions with Franzmann, I believed that this business correlated with the previous research outlined in the literature regarding small-scale production, as El Niño El Niño currently operates on a small-scale and does not turn a profit. My observations and conversations with Franzmann and Ryan seemed to indicate an ‘art for art’s sake’ (Bourdieu 1993 p. 51) ethos and in many ways the operation could barely be described as a business in its current mode of operation.

However towards the end of writing this thesis, I was finally able to interview Tom Cooney who has been living in Paris for the past three years. His insights and motivations revealed a somewhat more pragmatic economic vision for the label. Despite this he prefaced his answers with the point that to him the aesthetic of the music was more important to him than generating capital—which explains to some extent his relationship with Franzmann and Ryan. Perhaps Cooney is different in his ethos because he has a degree in Economics and International Business. It would also appear that since his migration, coupled with a number of challenges the label has faced, the two most active members have become more focused on goals of a purely artistic nature. During the interview Cooney revealed that he intended to return to Brisbane in September 2013 and rejoin the label (which he now has). He stated he was interested in investigating new ways to make the business profitable, or to at least break even.

The nature of El Niño El Niño

Located above a café is the workspace of the community of musicians that operate under the umbrella El Niño El Niño. Currently the label has five acts the business promotes and manages—the groups Major Chord, Big Strong Brute, and Carry Nation and the solo performers McKisko and Tom Cooney. The two partners Tom Cooney and Denny Ryan share responsibility with Helen Franzmann (who performs under the name McKisko), she and Ryan live in the workspace with their two young

children. Ryan is a mixed media artist, and occasionally helps to produce film clips and take press shots for the acts on the roster. Ryan also helps with general administrative duties to do with the business.



Fig. 5. El Niño El Niño Headquarters.(photo by Edward Guglielmino)

El Niño El Niño started as a means for the two musicians who were initially involved with the company—Helen Franzmann and Tom Cooney—to publish their music. Cooney had taken his record to a number of large and small-scale indie labels to discuss the possibility of them releasing it. However, as stated by Ryan and Cooney, the labels seemed uninterested in supporting an artist who was still emerging, or, if they were, the deals they offered were particularly inequitable.



Fig 6. Franzmann with her son in the domestic / workspace (photo by Edward Guglielmino)

‘Originally, Tom ... was getting ready to release his first album and shopped it around with his manager at the time. He went and met with all different labels in Sydney and Melbourne. When nothing happened I said, “nothing happened, so let’s just do it”. We started our own label and do it ourselves now’ (Personal Communication, Ryan 2012).

‘It was pretty simple... we shopped [the album] a bit...to some managers and labels and we didn't get many offers and the offers we did get were not very exciting. And...seeing that I had a degree in business and I understood contracts and I thought it didn't make much sense for them to take the percentages they were taking to do the things I wanted to do when we could outsource the PR. We could just sort of put up a little bit of money and get our own networks set up, when I say we I mean like pretty much me and Denny and the need to... like this dependency on a major label who's going to take an unfair cut of your music, of the fruits of your label it didn't seem worth it. It didn't make any sense to me’ (Personal Communication, Cooney 2013).

To begin with, due to the success of Tom Cooney's and then Helen Franzmann's début records, the business was profitable and started to sign other musicians that the partners approved of for aesthetic reasons, using the advance and recoupment model and the networks first generated with their successful releases. The partners had the intention of turning a small profit, or at the very least, breaking even, but were skeptical about applying any business planning to their release structure, as the first two releases had been successful, with little business planning or considerations. While the business was profitable it formed a relationship with a major Australian distribution company 'Inertia'⁴, providing the business with a production and distribution deal. (Both the 'P&D deal' and the 'advance and recoupment model' are outlined in detail in the contextual review.) El Niño El Niño also contracted a publicist.

'The first few releases there was profit. We had extra money and money in the account and everything was going great and then it seemed to ... we had an issue Inertia and we didn't have really good balance sheets or anything like that. We hadn't done great accounting. We just thought if there's money in the account left over after expenses then we're doing well. And then we got another artist and things got a little bit messier...' (Personal Communication, Cooney 2012).

'Actually when we started we had distribution through Inertia and we did contact them and they really loved Tom's [Cooney] album and what we contacted them with and they ended up saying they would distribute everything after that—but we have canned our connection because our contract ran out and we just didn't want to renew it because it was costing us more than assisting. We found ourselves being asked to do things that we didn't really want to do, like put out certain print media with the JB HiFi logo, which we didn't have. [Then you] have to pay for their refunding, and you just think "Oh, in debt." And you could have used that money with purpose' (Personal Communication, Ryan, 2012).

⁴ An Australian record company, specializing in P&D deals.

One of the factors that prevented the business from continuing to generate a profit stems from the oppositional anti-business ethos with which it first established itself. All three participants discussed this ethos at length, however Cooney was the only participant to hold a negative view, saying that he had learnt a lesson from this ethos, whereas Franzmann and Ryan tended to see it as one of their core strengths.

‘Yes it was hilariously ideological. It was like the music against the business kind of stuff and anyone who was signed to the label had to say “fuck you” to someone in a position of power in the music industry, and there was ... and to say the word “sign” was a joke anyway because there were no contracts involved’ (Personal Communication, Cooney, 2013).

Due to this idealistic approach to business, the participants allowed Inertia to take charge of the marketing and pressing of El Niño El Niño’s releases. Inertia’s methods of marketing El Niño El Niño’s releases, and their distribution models, were based upon the large-scale releases with which Inertia was experienced. Due to this increased marketing spend El Niño El Niño ended up losing a large amount of income from a number of releases that did not sell at the rate Inertia anticipated. Unlike the next two case studies (Lofly Hangar and Edward Guglielmino & The Show), there were no options for cross-subsidy for El Niño El Niño, other than the participants injecting their personal income into the business, as the businesses sole source of income was through the distribution, promotion and licensing of music—these mistakes were immediately detrimental to the functioning of the business. The three participants put their own personal income into the business to pay the debts. After this occurrence, they decided not to invest too heavily in other musicians, and scaled down their operations.

‘There were just so many fees, things like all of our music going to shops like JB HIFI, when albums like ours didn’t sell and our albums aren’t necessarily going to sell in shops like that, when they were returned we would get charged a returns fee and there were just lots of fee’s like that, that would pop up. Most of the sales are at gigs and at the smaller shops’ - (Personal Communication Franzmann, 2012).

Negus examines a similar situation to the one described above in the USA, where corporate distributors engaged with niche record labels. He describes the nature of the corporate culture conflicting with the required methods for distributing a niche (small-scale) release. These different methods led to a number of retail opportunities being lost between niche releases and indie record stores—the outlets which consumers interested in niche goods are more likely to frequent. Further, Negus examines how these niche labels often handed control of their pressing over to the corporate distributors, and due to the distributors' inexperience with these niche products they often overestimated the potential sales, leading to over-production and a number of returns and costs incurred by the label (1999 pp. 58-60).

Reconstituting the label as an umbrella operation.

Eventually for the reasons outlined, it became increasingly difficult for El Niño El Niño to distribute and sell its releases in traditional record stores and turn a profit. Thus the business slowly downsized its operations and is now focusing on creating a home for the artists rather than a model based on investment and recoupment. The business operates as an online curatorial space and has a web store that acts somewhat like an artist-run gallery (as described in the literature review), which presents works that the directors enjoy, and offers the musicians a space to develop their work. In some cases, when the musicians' career progresses they are encouraged to move on from the collective. The business also uses an online mailing list, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and other online networks to promote its music and the events at which the artists perform. However, currently there are no contracts or economic arrangements between the label and the artists on the label.

Furthermore, the partners and Franzmann also use their professional networks, which they established throughout the business' formation and during their own artistic careers—to promote their artists. Lastly and most importantly due to the esteem which the business' roster has generated in the small-scale scene, many artists strive to be a part of the business in order to be a part of the culturally prominent collection of artists.

‘It’s kind of evolved... I think, we... for a while there we were not intending on releasing any other music, we were just going to use it for our own music and then gradually people have just come into vision that we can help in some way. But we’ve arranged it in a way where we are not investing a lot of money into it. We are just helping with promotion and support. So there is less of a financial commitment for us’ (Personal Communication, Franzmann 2012).

After their experiences working with the large-scale music industry the participants contend that the systems and networks these businesses are involved with are extremely wasteful and out of touch with the technologies and methods available to musicians due to the increasing speed and prevalence of the Internet (as described by Knowles 2007 pp5-7). The participants quickly concluded that these systems of publishing and distributing music were unfeasible for the business considering their musical preferences. The majority of the acts on the label cannot afford expensive advertising, nor would their records recoup the cost of a marketing campaign. According to all the participants the easiest way for their small-scale acts to get noticed and sell music is in a music venue after a show or when someone actively looks for the artist on the Internet. Franzmann and Cooney also self-distribute their releases to small-scale specialist record stores throughout Australia and some select overseas stores.

‘[Regarding the traditional music industry] It’s a dinosaur. It’s an old model, it doesn’t work but it takes a lot of money to get things to work in that old framework. Yeah, I don’t see any point in distribution for independent artists. I think public relations is important, but I don’t know how you make your money back from fifteen grand into promoting an album. I don’t know how you make that money back. Yeah, I think we’re very outside the industry completely (Personal Communication, Ryan 2012)

With the decreasing amount of capital another issue has emerged for El Niño El Niño: the partners all feel that their skill set does not always match their artists' needs. Franzmann contends that it is very important for the business to sub-contract professionals such as a publicist, or a booking agent to help build their artists' profiles. For this reason she applies for grants on a regular basis for her work, and offers advice to other musicians on how to prepare an arts grant.

'I think also because its our own music its really important to have—for me anyway—I don't like being the point of contact, its nice to have someone in between' (Personal Communication Franzmann 2012).

However, in many cases now the business cannot afford to sub-contract these professionals, as in many cases artists on the label are unsuccessful in their applications or do not apply. Franzmann has been successful in her own applications for a number of grants. Her work is highly esteemed in artistic circles and she often performs at the Gallery Of Modern Art in Brisbane. In the case of Helen Franzmann her work has been able to generate economic capital, due to its cultural esteem.

The accumulation of cultural capital

'One is in fact in an economic world inverted: the artist cannot triumph on the symbolic terrain except by losing on the economic terrain (at least in the short run), and vice versa (at least in the long run)' (Bourdieu, 1996 p. 83).

Despite the lack of economic capital, the participants in the business, particularly the musicians, have gathered much cultural capital due to their adherence to the 'autonomous principle' (Bourdieu 1993 p. 51) and their contribution to the Brisbane small-scale music scene. According to Franzmann's comments, her art for art's sake ethos is something which she started out with, and she has never considered the prospect of releasing her own work for economic reasons.

‘Honestly I don’t think about it, I just make work because I have an impulse, I guess – the only thing I can say - is that I’d really like to do this for my whole life - and look back at my work at the end of my life and be proud of what I do. I do not think about a particular audience or whether my work would be suitable for arts funding. I just create work and whatever comes from it is great! But it is not my intention when I create it. I do it for myself – I get an immense sense of gratification once I complete a project’ (Personal Communication, Franzmann 2012).

This antithesis to the typical music industry ethos clearly aligns with the ontologies first described by Bourdieu and are outlined in the literature review. This has allowed El Niño El Niño to accumulate a large amount of cultural capital in the Brisbane music field and beyond. Furthermore, as first purposed by Bourdieu, in some cases this capital cultural can be converted into economic capital (Bourdieu 1993 p. 40, 58).



Fig 7. Franzmann's work space photo by Edward Guglielmino

Franzmann's work is highly acclaimed, and she has received government support through a number of initiatives: In 2009 she received \$25,000 to experience Berlin culture through a Queensland state government initiative called the 'Grant McLennan Fellowship' a fellowship judged purely on artistic and cultural merits. Towards the end of this case study Franzmann was also the recipient of a \$10,000

development grant from the state government to help her release her most recent record.

Although I felt that Franzmann was uncomfortable discussing this aspect of her work with me, it is clear that through publishing her own music with 'art for art's sake' (Bourdieu 1993 p51) values, and supporting an otherwise ignored sector of the Brisbane music industry, Franzmann was seeing benefits, and has been able to convert cultural capital into economic capital. This supports Bourdieu's assertion that if enough time is spent at the autonomous pole, the accumulation of cultural capital can lead to economic benefits (1993 p40, 58). As Cooney has been based overseas, and Denny is not a musician I am unable to provide examples of this with their work, however I expect that upon his return to Brisbane Cooney will also enjoy the benefits of this cultural capital.

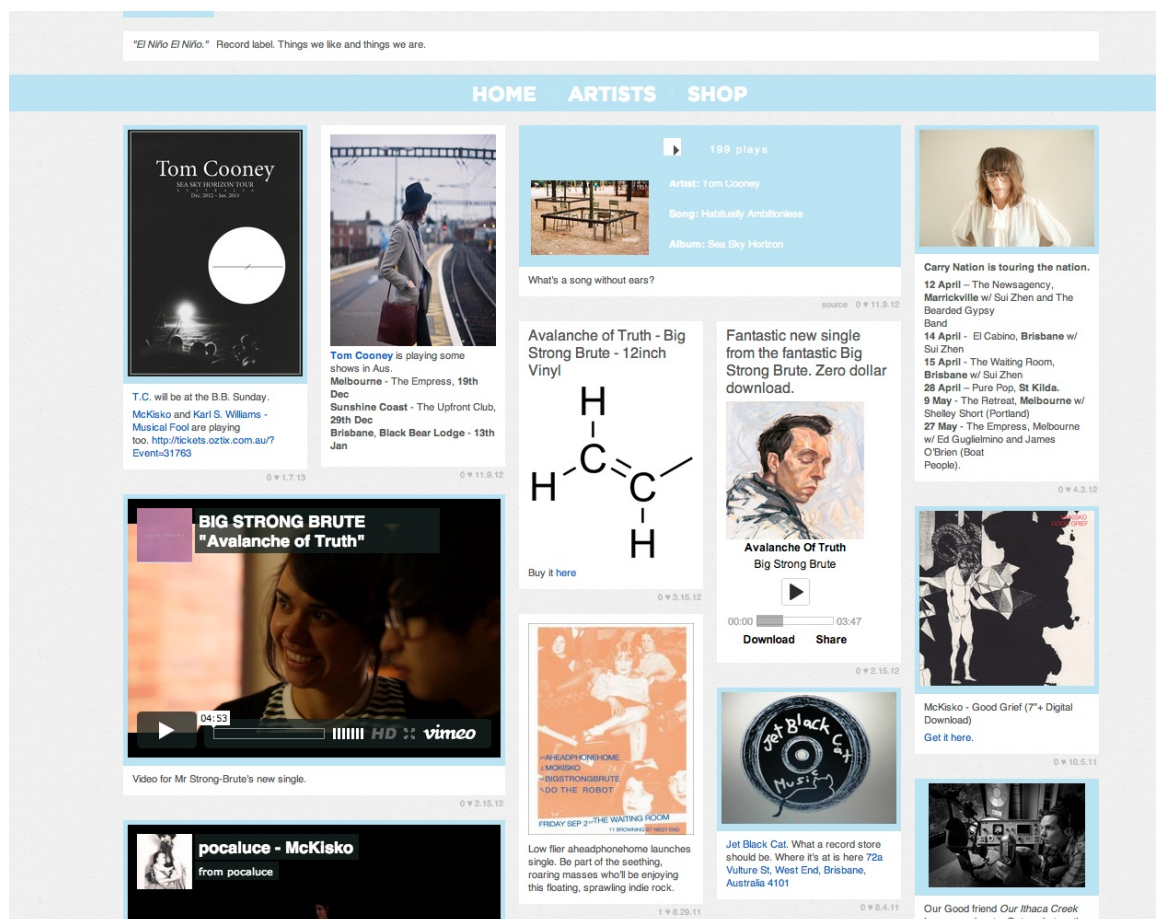


Fig. 8. El Niño El Niño Webstore

The other artists on the label are also highly esteemed within Brisbane. Since Carry Nation moved to Melbourne she has also enjoyed the benefits of the ‘autonomous principal’ (Bourdieu 1993 p. 40), including a recent inclusion of a performance on the Australian Broadcasting Company ‘Sunday Arts’ Program. Big Strong Brute has also accumulated a large amount of cultural capital within the Brisbane small-scale scene—as a participant in this scene I am aware of this anecdotally.

Conclusions

“I think the future of El Nino El Nino is, along with like tightening up of our fiscal side of things, I think it's going to be ... what I want it to be ... is a label that puts out undeniably great music whether it sells a lot or not” (Personal Communication, Cooney, 2013).

The business continues to this day to be deeply embedded in an ethos where it positions itself as an oppositional force working outside of and apart from the large-scale industry, aligning itself closely with the ‘autonomous principle’ outlined by Bourdieu (1993 p51). This alignment was unintentional and mainly developed from the number of negative experiences that the participants had when engaging with the practices and networks in which traditional large-scale music businesses operate. This small-scale music business now selects work purely on aesthetic terms and then offers the musicians a place to publish and display their work. The business also provides administrative assistance to its roster, and some career advice (as the partners have a large amount of experience operating inside and outside of the music industry).

‘The symbolic revolution through which artists free themselves from bourgeois demand by refusing to recognise any master except their art produces the effect of making the market disappear’ (Bourdieu 1996 p. 82).

Thus currently El Niño El Niño operates as curatorial space for musicians and it offers no financial support to the musicians on the label. Occasionally, as a part of the arrangement it has with some of its artists, the business does buy merchandise from the artist to sell on the El Niño El Niño website. Due to the cultural standing of

the business it is still a sought-after place for musicians to present their works—the business approval acting somewhat like an endorsement of an artist’s work. El Niño El Niño does not interfere with the creative process and only involves itself with an artists work when it comes time to release the music, a model very different from a traditional record label. Further, El Niño El Niño does not attempt to select songs for radio or manipulate the releases in anyway.

‘I see it as rolling along how it is really, I don’t feel like we are particularly ambitious with it we just want to keep rolling with it and releasing music we like, in comparison to the other businesses I don’t really think about it’ (Personal Communication, Franzmann 2012).

Upon his return to Brisbane Cooney intends to rejoin the label’s daily operations, where no doubt he will re-apply his business acumen, and it is possible that with his help it may return to an economically feasible model. However during my observation period, and throughout all my interviews with Franzmann and Ryan, and in my informal conversations with Franzmann, it became increasingly clear that Franzmann and Ryan were uninterested in using the business to generate income and were happy with its current status. They both also seemed uncomfortable discussing manners of an economic nature in regards to their business. It appears that, although the business had been established with some traditional record label objectives, since Cooney’s departure and with the challenges presented by attempting to participate in the established music industry the two most active members had turned away from attempting to generate economic capital. These two participants have strengthened in their resolve to operate outside of the traditional music industry and its economics.

On the other hand Cooney feels that with the appropriate adjustments it may be possible to reestablish El Nino El Nino as an economic and cultural force within the Australian ‘indie’ music scene. He may find that he is presented with challenges similar to those outlined in the next chapter, when a business is egalitarian but also has participants with different views on how it should be run. This can lead to a number of conflicts and issues.

Chapter 5

Lofly Hangar: The oscillating goals and ethos of an artist-run small-scale business

Background

Business Type: PTY LTD

Partners and Share Holders in Business: Andrew White, Philip Laidlaw and Chris Perren (formerly Joel Edmondson and Gregory Cooper)

Years Studied: 2010-2011

Years Active: 2007-current

Roles of partners (note the business was egalitarian and unstable, these roles were unofficial and unstable):

Andrew White: Main investor and visionary, venue maintenance (2007– current)

Philip Laidlaw: Business planning, public face of business, venue maintenance (2007-current)

Chris Perren: Web design and marketing, Venue maintenance (2009–current)

Greg Cooper: Venue Bookings, Venue maintenance (Dec 2010–June 2010)

Joel Edmondson: Venue maintenance (March 2009–June 2010)

Ad hoc structure: Lofly Hangar is the umbrella name for Lofly Records (record label) Hangar (warehouse venue, and later mobile venue events).

Current Status: No longer active as a registered business, now putting on mobile events and putting out music without a formal business structure.

Method of data collection:

1. Experiential knowledge from participation in scene and regular attendance of events from 2007–2011 and part time consultation from January–July 2011.
2. Formal qualitative observational periods, drawing on methods used in ‘participant observation’;
and, semi-structured interviews with three partners Andrew White, Chris Perren and Phil Laidlaw from August 2011–December 2012.

Introduction

This chapter investigates the artist-run small-scale music business ‘Lofly Hangar’, embracing its economics, its artistic vision, and the business’s relationship with the music industry and the Brisbane music scene. Using qualitative data from my time as an employee of the business, triangulated with interviews from the participants, some media studies and an [independent?] academic examination of the business, I present a view of the working processes of this small-scale music company. This view differs from that outlined by the research summarised in the literature review, research which relies heavily on the theoretical frameworks developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1993/1996). Rather than a homogenous ethos, Lofly Hangar operated with a discontinuity as its properties changed dependent on which partner was guiding the business, and on the external and internal factors affecting the business. This chapter describes this state of flux and the relationship Lofly Hangar had with the Brisbane music scene and the wider field of music production.

Despite its influential position in the Brisbane small-scale ‘indie’ music scene, with the exception of the few articles cited below, Lofly Hangar has remained an under-examined part of Brisbane’s music ecology in both academic and media studies. This may, in part, be explained by ‘The Hangar’—the venue arm and the most renowned aspect of the business—failing to obtain council approval for its relatively short existence. The venue was based in the inner city Brisbane suburb Red Hill and its illegal nature meant shows were generally not publicised through traditional media outlets. Events were mainly advertised through online social networks, text messaging and word of mouth, mimicking the methods of the small-scale ‘Do-It-Yourself’ Dance and Punk networks outlined in the contextual review (Hesmondalgh 1996a,1996b,1997,1998,1999; Thompson 2004).

Method of data collection and observation (continued).

As noted in the background above, Lofly Hangar comprised two distinct arms: the record label, called Lofly Records, and the venue, known as The Hangar. The few studies of Lofly Hangar focus on the venue arm of the company rather than the part of the business engaged in the recording, pressing and distribution of music. When I

approached Lofly Hangar with a request to formally study their operations for my thesis, the partners invited me to attend a meeting to discuss how I would collect my observations. At this meeting, in order to inform the methodology for my data collection, I asked a few questions about their business methods. Two weeks after this meeting, the partners asked whether I would be able to contribute my expertise to the company for a small fee. Gradually my involvement increased, and on the 15th of January 2011 Andrew White, the principal investor, offered me an honorarium of \$300 a week to work with the company. This case study is formulated from observations and interview data that I collected after my ethical clearance on the 25th of August 2011, but is also informed by my experiential knowledge gathered before Lofly Hangar formally became one of the case studies for this research.

In this case, and in the case of my project ‘Edward Guglielmino & The Show’, I was granted access to all areas of these production houses and consequently many of the methods I used to collect data would align with Gold’s (1958) concept of complete participant. However, as a paid consultant and being embedded in the process, I was unable to take extensive notes, so, at the end of each day I diarised and reflected upon the day’s events as a researcher. Furthermore, as a considerable amount of digital communication was used to form plans and create structures (to a larger degree than face to face), I was able to archive these exchanges between the business partners. This data provided me with a clear vision of the business processes. I made sure to remind the participants that despite my consultation fee my work at their company was still going to form a part of my research thesis.

My relationship with Lofly Hangar

My relationship with Lofly Hangar dates back to 2007, when Phil Laidlaw, one of the founders of the business, contacted me about The Hangar soon after the venue opened. Skeptical about the venue, given that it had recently opened and at the time no other music venues operated at that end of Brisbane, I declined to play with my solo project and instead offered to play with a free-improvisational band I was in called ‘Lost Of Love’. Upon arriving at the venue my skepticism faded: the venue was unlike anything in Brisbane at the time, it reminded me a lot of the illegal warehouse spaces I had seen while in New York the previous year. Like those venues

there was no bar so people brought their own alcohol (or other party favors) into the venue, saving them a significant amount of money on a night out.

As noted by McMillian (2010) the venue looked more like a domestic living room, and, indeed, was listed as a private residence. There was no security, but at the same time no issues with violence or unruly behavior. Anecdotally, this was because at this time the punters were comprised mainly of local practitioners within the Brisbane small-scale music scene, and a core group of fans of this niche music genre. People went to this space to enjoy the music—intoxication and partying were originally a secondary consideration for audiences at this venue.

When it was my turn to perform with my band, the free and unstructured nature of the space enhanced my performance: I slid my knees along the concrete floor and picked up a rusty nail, I kept singing as I bled into my jeans, so caught up in this new space and my performance I did not realise what had happened until after the show. The whole experience was exhilarating, and it did not typify a Brisbane music venue atmosphere. At the time, apart from the venue 610 (Rogers, 2008 pp. 643-645) in the Fortitude Valley, it was rare that a performance space would not be heavily guarded with security, and restrictive in its rules, dress code, and social expectations. At the end of the night one of the partners, Philip Laidlaw, took me into a back room and paid me \$400—more than I had ever been paid for a gig. Laidlaw also said any time I wanted to play to just email and ask. Most venues in Brisbane at the time required significant planning and negotiation in order to secure a gig, whereas The Hangar, at the outset, was relatively informal in its booking structure.



Fig. 9 View of the venue Lofly.com, 2013, Company Photo

The Hangar had provided me with an experience previously only matched by playing interstate or international shows: a space that was unrestricted, liberal, and paid a decent fee for a show (when compared to other gigs in the small-scale scene). Very quickly, through word of mouth, facilitated by the similar experiences of punters and musicians, The Hangar would become one of the most revered spaces in Brisbane in the small-scale music scene.

The evolution of the business.

‘It’s interesting because there were two sides to the business, the label and ‘Hangar’ [venue space]. The label very much started with a philosophy, you know, in terms of what music we thought was interesting and important. The Hangar side really just started as a place for all of us to play music that we liked and have parties where we played music that we liked but then as that went on priorities did change, and I don’t necessarily think for the better...’ (Personal communication, White 2012).

According to the interviews with three of the partners, Chris Perren, Philip Laidlaw and Andrew White, and some media coverage of the venue and the label, the

business evolved organically without any significant business planning or ambitions on the part of either of the initial visionaries—Andrew White and Phil Laidlaw.



Fig. 10 Inside the Hangar Photography - Matt Redlich, 2013

A series of unplanned events led to a business model that was economically successful for the time the venue arm of the business was operational.

In 1998 White returned from the UK having spent time as a participant in the small-scale electronic dance scenes. According to Hesmondhalgh these scenes relied heavily on ‘semi-legal’ and illegal warehouse parties which took place outside of the metropolitan areas (1998, p236).

‘Andrew [White] and I started Lofly together. It was his idea – he had come back from time in the UK full of ambitions of moving up from his 4-track and getting one of those new computers that people were recording music on ... Initially we wanted to form a label and put our stuff out on it but also kind of source similar records from the world—at the time it was, sort of, not very based in Brisbane at all. And we

weren't very heavily connected to community here – we were bedroom losers – that is why we started the label' (Personal Communication, Laidlaw 2011).

Laidlaw and White established the Lofly record without any formal business structure, initially as a means to publish their own musical works. White and Laidlaw both felt that their music was too innovative and thus not a commercially viable investment for an established music business. Furthermore their lack of personal connections in the music industry made it difficult for them to contact the artist and repertoire departments at the established labels in Australia. White had been inspired from his time as a participant in the semi-autonomous dance music scenes in the UK and wished to recreate the same scene type in Brisbane.



Fig. 11 Outside the hangar venue Photo by Matt Redlich

'I used to go to this club in Brighton and Fat Boy Slim [an established large-scale artist] used to play and there'd be like less than a hundred people there every Saturday but it was awesome. And then several years later he is playing to a million people in Brighton' (Personal Communication, White, 2012).

Back in Brisbane in early 2007 the business expanded and changed when Laidlaw and White leased a space to rehearse and to produce their records. Later, through a series unplanned of changes, the space was converted to a place for the performance for local (and eventually national and international) small-scale bands (McMillen 2010 n.p.), most of which loosely fitted within the ‘indie’ genre. White and Laidlaw were quickly immersed in the local Brisbane small-scale indie scene, which led to a greater interest in releasing music from Brisbane, with the label arm mimicking the methods that White had witnessed in the UK.

‘It was really we had a vision about ... what music we thought, was important and we thought that wasn’t around either probably locally or nationally and so we wanted to a to do something to the place where we live locally but also hopefully add something to the body of work that is music. Yeah. So, two things, a local cultural impact but also we wanted to curate and also further our music towards the vision that we had’
(Personal Communication White, 2012).

The venue was established with ambitions to create a new avenue for the performance of small-scale innovative music within the Australian music scene. Ultimately it was unsuccessful in this goal, however it became central to the Brisbane small-scale music scene that I am a part of, for a period of three years. The venue’s popularity and success often overshadowed the label’s releases. From 2007 until 2011 this space was an illegal venue where for \$10 you could see bands play, whilst bringing your own substances of choice, free to do as you please as long as you did not endanger or upset anyone else. Its popularity grew, and the fortnightly events gathered a cult following.

Eventually, regardless of what bands played, there was usually a crowd of one hundred or more in attendance. The money that remained after covering the event expenditure—which was fairly low due to volunteers running the night and the low rent—was set aside to fund the record label’s releases. During the time that the venue was operational the label arm of the business was run at a loss, since the primary purpose of the label was as an avenue for the partners to showcase their own music

and other music that they saw as culturally important, unintentionally aligning with the 'art for art's sake' values (Bourdieu 1993, p51). In this period there was no consideration of whether the music released by the label would have any commercial success. The partners selected work for release based solely on their personal taste in music. This generated a lot of symbolic capital for the record label within Australia's national small-scale scene. 'I guess we wanted to be egalitarian and we wanted it to be altruistic and we wanted to kind of break-even, but we didn't want to be dominated by money' (Personal Communication, White, 2012).

Soon after its establishment as a central performance space and label in the Brisbane small-scale scene, musicians Greg Cooper, Chris Perren and Joel Edmondson joined the business. Before this time the business was cash only and had no formal structure, however after these participants joined the business Lofly Hangar incorporated, and as it could not offer its volunteers wages, they were made partners and given an equal share of the business. Furthermore, as a volunteer within the business (as was the case with Cooper, Perren and Edmondson), the opportunity to record and release music was provided through the label arm. Laidlaw and White both operated home recording studios, and would use capital generated from events to pay for album pressings and promotions, as they felt uncomfortable drawing a personal income from the company, something they reiterated many times. This is most probably because their day jobs provided ample income.

Although the business partners consider the company to have been egalitarian, in many ways, due to their roles as the main investors, volunteers and visionaries in the company, Andrew White and Phil Laidlaw both played leadership roles in running the business during the time that I was a consultant and taking observations for this thesis, although this was not formal and there was no stable formal or leadership structure for the business. Laidlaw and White were also older than the other partners. I noted that time or investment capital put into the company was usually unofficially converted into hierarchy at the weekly meetings whenever things were at a stalemate.

As noted above, none of the business partners drew an income from Lofly Hangar, and all of them had other forms of employment that they had to balance with the commitments that the company required. During my observational period, two of the

other partners Greg Cooper and Joel Edmondson informally left the organization by no longer participating on a regular basis, although technically they still owned a share of the company. In this period Greg Cooper tended to book the venue and Joel Edmondson was not core to the operations at the time I was a participant therefore I did not interview him to consolidate my observations. Cooper was unavailable for comment.

The changing properties of Lofly Hangar.

In my time as contributor to the business (Jan 2011–July 2011) most of the labels releases did not generate enough capital to cover the cost of production. The releases were funded by revenue generated by the venue. Bands that played the venue were paid a fee usually between \$100–\$300 and the rest of the profits were used to subsidise the label, occasionally if there was a short fall, White would offer his personal income to the company. However, in late 2010 the venue was shut down due to frequent neighborhood complaints about noise. This led to a requirement that the label arm of the company at least cover its own expenses rather than rely on regular cash injections from the venue.

The egalitarian nature of the business, coupled with the various opinions of the partners regarding the use of music to generate capital, made the restructuring of the businesses take some time. Eventually the partners concluded that they would attempt to find new ways to monetise the recordings, however the exact method for doing this, along with what acts to release, was never fully agreed upon during my time as an observer and consultant. During this period White invested his personal income to cover expenses that the business incurred, including paying a part of my honorarium. White had hoped that my experience as a small-scale artist with a few successful releases would contribute to this restructuring process.

This period where the business was going through a restructure and the partners were negotiating over a new business method offered the greatest insight into the nature of Lofly Hangar. Many of the partners resisted using traditional marketing and artist and repertoire methods as they had concerns about how this would affect what they considered their standing in the field of small-scale production. It was often hard for

the partners to agree and conclude on a method where they could market their releases in such a way that would generate income without jeopardizing the cultural esteem that the label had generated within the field of small-scale indie music production Brisbane.

I also noted, at times, that the partners were concerned about revealing their desire to generate capital for the label to each other in their weekly meetings. Individually they were willing to discuss marketing, selecting a song for radio playability and other traditional music marketing methods. However, as a group the discussions tended to be more oppositional to these ideals and strategies. Based on these observations in the field, and the answers in the interviews, it became clear that Lofly Hangar did not have a set ethos; rather it was constantly changing depending on the circumstances the business faced and the environment in which the partners were discussing future plans.

It appeared that this company did not sit on either of the poles outlined by Bourdieu (1993,1996), rather it reconstituted depending on the circumstances the business was facing, and on who was the central figure within the label's egalitarian structure—and to whom the plans were being laid out. As Andrew White was my final interviewee I requested clarification on the fluctuating nature of the business.

'I think when you add into that there were a bunch of us and we're trying to be egalitarian and some people had a more probably commercial sense of music than others...Within the group ... there was a difference of view and some people's tastes probably touched the populous more than others...some are more elitist than others so then there was that dialogue within us' (Personal Communication, White 2012).

During my time participating member of the company I was often witnessing heated discussions about whether a band was the right fit for the label. As described by White generally these discussions were centered on whether a band was innovative enough to fit the label's catalogue. In the interviews and in the day-to-day running of the business the partners of Lofly Hangar all contend that the relationship between

arts and commerce was difficult to navigate, the mission of the business often shifting between goals of a financial nature, and ideals centered more on the creation and promotion of culturally and economically autonomous music. Many of the partners were concerned that if the label released something too ‘commercial’ that the key demographic which bought the labels goods would consider the new product a ‘sell out’.

‘Well okay, we also need to make money and if we’re going to make money, we need to sort of start tapping into revenue streams, that we don’t totally believe in, but that’s a means to achieve this very pure and very self-less thing that we originally wanted, so let’s do it anyway,” and gradually it gets convoluted like that and then you fail (laugh) and then you come back to, “Well, we shouldn’t have left our original vision’ (Personal Communication, Chris Perren 2012).

The Shifting Nature of Lofly Hangar

One example of the shifting nature of Lofly Hangar can be provided with this account of a business trip which White and I undertook at the end of May in 2011. This occurred before I was formally studying the business, however my intentions to make Lofly Hangar a site of study had been made clear.

During this time Andrew White was driven to make the business profitable by setting up Hangar shows down the East coast of Australia, creating a promotional touring route for the company. Andrew White and I flew down to Melbourne to manage a promotional show for the label (which White played) and meet up with other small-scale labels in Melbourne. The trip to Melbourne was costly to begin with and entirely funded by White. White had also met an Australian businesswoman on the plane ride down whilst flying business class. The woman had taken to White and, according to White, was making various offers to bankroll aspects of the business.

On a night when we had planned to meet up with various small-scale labels, White instead went to a dinner with the business woman where the then federal minister for arts was in attendance. The next night White took me and the former partner Joel Edmondson out to dinner at an expensive restaurant. The three of us spoke of Lofly

Hangar as if it was going to be the next corporate independent to scale the Australian music scene. At this point it seemed clear that White was hoping to receive a return on the capital he had invested into the business. It also appeared that White was hoping to guide the business towards a more profitable model.

After our dinner we went to see a band on the roster 'ReEnactment' play at a venue called 'The Pony'. Recently the band had released a new record through the label arm of the business, and were relatively popular in sound and following in comparison to the other avant-guard acts on the label. White initially believed this band to be a solid investment in the future economic sustainability of the label. When we arrived we were informed that half the band had nowhere to stay, also they had neglected to hire a sound technician for the show. White and I ended up trying to mix the sound and the post-opulence glow quickly faded as the band screamed through a busted PA to a semi-enthusiastic and intoxicated Melbourne crowd.

The next day Andrew White and I concluded that the reality was that at that moment none of the acts signed to the label component of the business were capable of generating the income to support his aspirations for the future of the label. However as long as events at The Hangar venue could continue cross subsidizing the label's releases the business could continue paying me my honorarium and paying for the marketing of releases. White directed me to focus on applying for arts and business grants henceforth. He saw his next move as negotiating some sort of philanthropic model with the business woman he had met on the plane. In the meantime the label could be a 'break-even' until we found an act that could help propel the label into profitability. We both returned to our hotel rooms hung-over from the night before, making notes to bring to the meeting with the other partners upon our return to Brisbane.

That night White received a phone call from an irate neighbor who lived close to the venue to tell White he was fed up with the noise from the venue and was going to issue a formal complaint to the city council. Concerned about the legal standing of the venue White agreed to shut down the venue in return for there being no complaint. White still believed that with his new connections he could make the label into a fully-fledged sustainable business. We returned to Brisbane with what was perceived to be a combination of great and terrible news.

‘It was just more—yeah I don’t know. You start to need more things and you start to think “Well, if we can just get to this next step and we’re able to reach this much further,” and so you do things to try to get to that next step. You either make it or you don’t. If you make it then you’re like, “Oh, okay cool,” then we keep doing what we do, but if you don’t you’re still like, “Ah.” We never wanted to be a major label anyway’ (Personal Communication, Chris Perren, 2012).

The tensions between the heteronomous and autonomous poles (Bourdieu 1993/1996) within the label started to cause a distinct debate within the egalitarian label. The discussions were focused on the best way the label could monetise its recorded content without compromising its autonomous stance (Bourdieu 1993 p51). Each director had different opinions about the degrees that these values needed to be compromised in order to keep the business running.

‘...common conceptualisations of reward, success and failure within the DIY independent scene are generally positioned in relation to well-worn tropes embedded within rock ideology relating to art, creativity and commerce. Here, there is an internalisation and naturalisation of wider circulating ideologies about what it means to create music in an industrial context’ (Strachan 2003 p. 27).

Although White agreed with his colleagues and saw economic success as something that required a reduction in the focus on the aesthetic values that the partners preferred, he viewed this as a necessary ‘evil’ to keep the business afloat. A common thread throughout the interviews and in my day-to-day observations of the business was that commerciality would inevitably lead to less innovative acts being given spaces on the bill at The Hangar venue and less interesting work being released by Lofly Recordings label. White also contended that Australian audiences were very conservative and that innovative acts would not be appreciated on a mass scale in Australia.

‘I think it’s very hard in Australia to push culture. People don’t necessarily buy it and everyone goes to the lowest common denominator generally. People play the safe card. Culturally in

Australia there are a lot, I feel, that maybe have a cynical view’
(Personal Communication White, 2012).

‘Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects,
classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the
distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the
distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the
objective classifications is expressed or betrayed’ (Bourdieu 1984
p. 5).

In some cases the partners concluded that they should compromise their artistic
values when booking the venue space in order to raise money for an innovative, non-
commercial album. This compromise seemed to be more acceptable within the
business and with the key demographic.

‘We could put on obscure bands, and then, oh, hang on only 100 people,
come this week. And then we put on a band that we might not have
liked that much but they’re popular and then 300 [people] come. And
then we’ve got enough money to put out a record, a really obscure
record, that we believe in. And so there’s always tos and fros you
know—do I do this to make money to do this and yeah I think that’s
when it gets very hard’ (Personal Communication, White, 2012).

In the interviews and during the meetings I observed Phil Laidlaw and Chris Perren
both agreed that the label needed to be self-sustaining. Laidlaw and Perren agreed the
best option was to downsize the label and run everything at lower costs whereas
White was committed to releasing music which could help cover the labels expenses.
This provided another internal debate within the label—these internal challenges
caused the label to be in a constant state of flux. Every release that the label prepared
was heavily discussed and negotiated by the partners—occasionally no common
ground could be reached so whoever was at the label office on that day would direct
the release.

‘Financially sustainable so it breaks even. I think that doing that, the
answer to that is a combination of downsizing seems strange because
it’s already pretty damned downsized, but downsizing things and

restructuring things to the point that the... So you're lowering the overhead costs significantly and then hopefully increasing the profit somehow and then eventually working to some point where it matches, I guess' (Personal Communication, Perren 2012).

Another example of the fluctuating nature of the business can be seen in the recording deals offered by the label arm. At first 50/50 deals were being offered, where the label owned copyright for the recordings (somewhat mimicking 'Rough Trade' (Hesmondhalgh 1997) however this changed dependent on the artists being signed and on the economic health of the business. In my last meeting with White he described a new model that was based on collectivism whereby the label would not take any profits from the artists' recordings—once again shifting the nature of the label.

Due to these inconsistencies and shifting ideals, despite what I consider to be my best efforts, my consultation was proving to be a waste of resources for the company. I brought this to the partners' attention, and we parted ways amicably on the 1st of August 2011. Until the end of 2011 I continued as a passive observer in order to summarise my experiences in the field further. This was primarily achieved by my continued attendance at their shows, regularly communicating with the directors about the company, and being included on some email threads and digital communications.

Lofly Hangar's contribution to the ecology of the music industry.

'I wouldn't say it's an island, because I feel like we're connected to other indie labels. But, I wouldn't say it operates within the mainstream music industry because it ... I don't know, it's too small. I guess the traditional music industry is founded on big money and marketing and when you don't have either of those things it's hard to even participate' (Personal Communication, Perren, 2012).

Regarding Lofly Hangar's relationship with the traditional music industry, a common thread amongst the participants was the belief that the business should be semi-autonomous in both its artistic and economic modes of production. Laidlaw

contended that this was changing as the business evolved. White and Perren on the other hand often pointed to Lofly Hangar's scale of production as keeping it outside the mainstream field of music production. However, when the venue was profitable, the business invested capital into publicity for the labels releases.

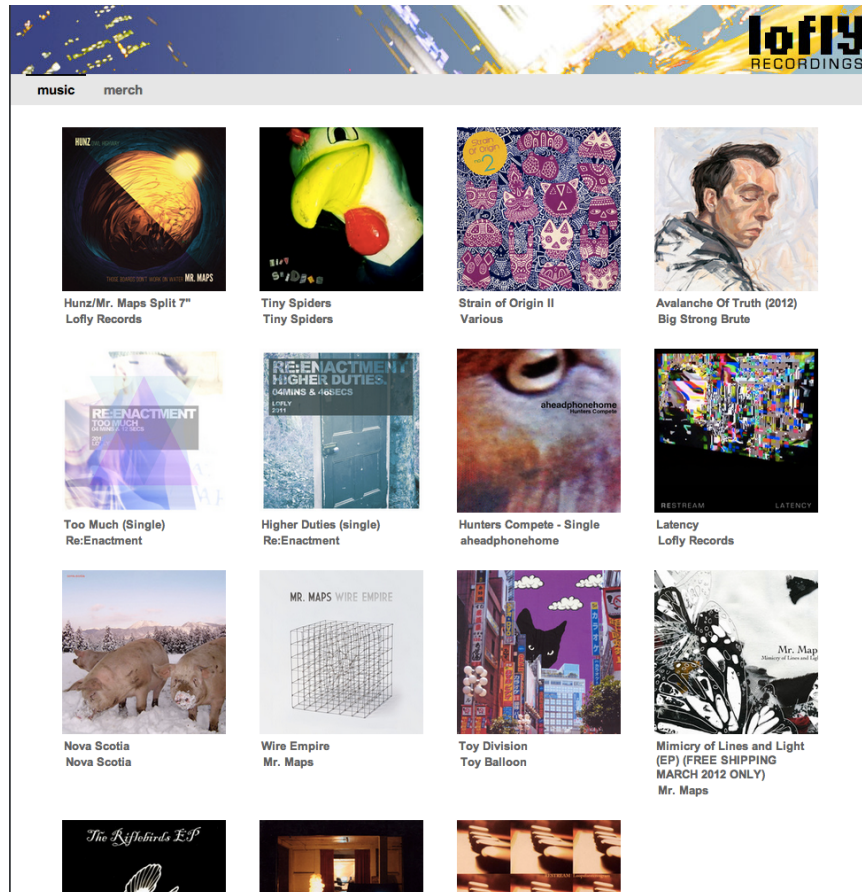


Fig. 12 Lofly Hangar webstore (Lofly.com, 2012)

As Strachan notes:

Small-scale practitioners of this type are not 'professional' but are deeply engaged and highly aware of the machinations of cultural production, while at the same time they often base much of their shared identity in opposition (or relation) to othered music industry (Strachan 2007 p. 246).

When I interviewed Phil Laidlaw we discussed the history of small-scale music businesses being corporatised (as outlined in the contextual review). We discussed mergers between small-scale labels and majors (See Mathieson 2000;

Hesmondhalgh 1996a; Lee 1995). Laidlaw expressed his distaste for large-scale distribution and promotion—he used an analogy to illustrate issues of aesthetics, suggesting that a product loses its essential nature when it is converted to a mass production model.

‘I think that would...that’s a great outcome for a business; so if you start a soup shop and someone comes along and says “that’s a really great soup shop I would really like to franchise it—I’ll give you 1.2 million dollars and now we are going to run soup shops which are just like your soup shop and you can have 5% of all those soup shops”, it’s a great financial and business outcome. But if that wasn’t your goal in the first place—if you wanted to make fantastic soup and enjoy the process of working though soup production—you wouldn’t be making your soup anymore [laughter]. You would go to your shop and some fucking teenager would be cutting up tomato’s at the back while following a laminated list on a wall’ (Personal Communication, Laidlaw 2011).

Here Laidlaw is summarising one of the ontologies of the small-scale ‘indie’ scene in Brisbane: these musical products are considered to be authentic and culturally autonomous, unlike their large-scale popular music counterparts. Perren also reveals an embedded ideology around the ideas of small-scale versus large-scale production. He gave the work of Lofly Hangar a ‘pure’ status in comparison to large-scale major labels. I asked for clarification on his use of ‘pure’ as a description. ‘I guess a really self-less want to help. Like really this very sort of all we want to get out of it is that other people are having fun...’ (Personal Communication, Perren 2012).

In Perren’s opinion the business is best described as altruistic and ‘pure’ and helping out artists for purely cultural reasons, or it operates in the same way as a major label does—as outlined in the contextual review—with the large-scale ontology outlined by Bourdieu (1993/1996). On the other hand White expressed that his main issue with the traditional music industry was that in his view the business models they used were very dated and unsustainable.

‘I just think that the business model changed, and no one’s got a new one now, and that’s my argument for the Australian Indies that are like

bigger than us and probably smaller than us but of all the indie labels in Australia are mostly using an American 80's model of the music business ... and the problem with that model is you used to put out 30 records who wanted to be successful and that would make you a zillion percent on your capital, whereas now no one can afford to do that. You know indies have 10 bands and they want them all to do well. They'll have to put money into all of them and probably none of them will do well' (Personal Communication, White, 2012).

Conclusions

As an egalitarian business Lofly Hangar's method and ontology will continue to shift depending on the internal debates and the external challenges that the business faces. White is interested in growing the business and occasionally making artistic compromises in order to raise capital. Perren and Laidlaw on the other hand seem more focused on how the business can contribute to the field in more altruistic 'Do-It-Yourself' ways. Lofly Hangar continues to operate today, despite numerous challenges and very little profitability. The primary motivation of all the partners is to nurture a small part of the Brisbane music community and all are motivated by a need to further the music that they see as important—the debates have centered on the most logical way to achieve this goal.

The statements above from the partners, along with my observations in the field, reveal an oscillating ontology within the business: it was believed that producing and promoting innovative art whilst still generating a profit was a task that was unachievable in the Brisbane locality; that the income from the venue could be used to produce innovative releases. The focus of the business changed when, due to neighborhood complaints, the venue was shut and was no longer able to fund the label. After this a new ethos was to emerge where the label had a goal of remaining self-sustaining. Ultimately I cannot comment on how the business is operating with this new goal—eventually it became apparent that my constant questioning was becoming increasingly unwelcome, so after being immersed in the business for six months I left the collective with many unresolved questions.

The label is still operational today and remains prominent within the Brisbane scene. The Hangar has reestablished itself as a mobile event that occurs at a number of venues, and currently has a regular night at the West End venue 'The Waiting Room'. I am still in contact with the partners on a social level, and hear news about the business on a regular basis. As all the partners are passionate volunteers I do not doubt that the business will continue in one form or another for some time to come, constantly reconstituting itself dependent on its own internal political battles and the outer economic and cultural challenges.

'It could be argued that one effect of such attempts at internal democracy was to intensify the tensions between the business and creative sides of Rough Trade, echoing the traditional conflicts between A&R and marketing departments in the major companies, and taking the company even further away from the elements of fusion in the commerce-creativity permitted early company's history by intensely co-operative working conditions referred to above' (Hesmondhalgh 1997, p. 296).

Whilst I was participating in this business as a consultant, I was also writing the literature review for this thesis, the similarities between the myths and research surrounding the UK punk label 'Rough Trade' and the issues 'Lofly Hangar' faced were astounding, so much so that at times during our weekly meetings I would bring up the label as a point of reference. Hesmondhalgh (1997, p. 269) asserted that many believe Rough Trades failure was due, in part, to 'Death by committee' (1997, pp. 269-270).

As I was embedded in this research, I have been aware of the internal disunities of the business in such a way that many other observers would be unable to perceive. In my experience in the field this is not a usual state for a music business to be in. Furthermore externally the operation looks as professional and as coherent as any other small-scale music business within the Brisbane field, and in many ways it appears to be more stable and coherent than other operations.

During the course of my consultation and research my already close personal relationships with the partners, in particular Perren, Laidlaw and White strengthened.

I continue to see them on a personal basis, and despite the disagreements outlined, they continue to work together regularly and continue to form an essential part of the Brisbane small-scale 'indie' music scene. Perhaps one of biggest strengths that 'Lofly Hangar' has is that none of these partners require any income for their work. In the case that the business falters the partners can inject their personal income into the business in order to keep it afloat.

Towards the end of writing this thesis on the 12th of August 2013 I played a show at a new mobile event run by the three remaining partners (Laidlaw, White and Perren). At the end of the show Laidlaw informed me that the show had made a profit which split evenly would provide \$20 for each band, he then handed me \$50 and said 'out of respect for you work'. My attempts to refuse the extra money were deflected; there is no doubt that this money had come from Laidlaw's own wallet. This perhaps more than any of the internal debates and struggles outlined, defines Lofly Hangar. Primarily these participants are philanthropists within the Brisbane small-scale music scene, offering their own time and occasionally income to sustain events. The main tensions between these partners were around how best to sustain this model, rather than profit from it.

These three partners are multifaceted people—outside their roles in the business and as key members of the Brisbane small-scale scene, they all have successful separate careers. Laidlaw is a Government employee, Perren is a sessional academic, and White is a medical doctor with a senior position at a regional hospital. As I have become closer with these participants, I have become increasingly aware of a divide between their artistic lives driven by their anti-commercial ethos and their other, separate work and social lives. These musicians live dual existences, and in the case of Laidlaw and White rarely do their work lives intersect with their artistic endeavors, other than an occasional subsidy for the business using personal income.

Chapter 6

A study of the recording and release of Sunshine State by Edward Guglielmino & The Show.

Background

Business Type: Sole Trader

Owner: Edward Guglielmino

Key contributors during the period of observation:

Management Firm, Mucho Bravado,

Producer, Jamie Travaskis

Key Musical Collaborator, Sam Schelenker

Method of data collection

Experiential knowledge from participation at center of project from 2001-2013.

Formal qualitative data collection during recording and release of new album from July 2010-Nov 2012 using methods of auto-ethnography.

Auto-ethnographic methods of data collection.

Parts of this study draw on methods used in auto-ethnography, and, in particular, the study of my own business in this chapter draws on many of the methods of auto-ethnography. Regarding the portion of auto-ethnographic research in my thesis, I have spent some time researching the issues surrounding such ‘self-centered’ (Manning N.D) research, and have read a number of papers outlining the issues and rewards of auto-ethnographic research (Ellis 1999,2007; Watson 2008; Holtz 2003; Manning N.D; Muncey 2005; Burnier 2006). I have also considered the ethics of such research with reference to Ellis (2007), ‘Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research With Intimate Others’.

‘As a genre of writing and research, auto-ethnography starts with personal experiences and studies “us” in relationships and situations. Doing auto-ethnography involves a back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience.’ (Ellis 2007 pp. 13-14)

I also follow the set of paradigms set out by Anderson (2006) in his article ‘Analytic Auto-ethnography’, in which he proposes that the term ‘analytic auto-ethnography’ refers to research in which the researcher is: ‘A full member of the research group or setting, visible in published texts and committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena’ (p.1).

Auto-ethnographic research had a controversial beginning but has since evolved and positioned itself as a viable ethnography when researching groups in their natural setting. Denzin (1994) defended auto-ethnography states that,

‘established through recourse to a set of rules that refer to reality outside the text, we cling to a conception of a ‘world out there’ that is truthfully and accurately captured by the researcher’s methods (p.304). Hence a text is valid (legitimate) if it is sufficiently grounded, triangulated, based on naturalistic indicators, carefully fitted to a theory, comprehensive in scope, credible in terms of member checks, and so on. The text’s author then announces these validity claims to the reader. Such claims now become the

text's warrant to its own authoritative re-presentation of the experience and social world under investigation (p. 297).

Background (continued)

This chapter examines a period in my own career when I was preparing to release a new album, 'Sunshine State', and the period immediately after its release. It tracks my motivations as a small-scale producer working within a network of other similar producers. In seeking to understand the nature of my project I kept journals during the recording process of the new record, and also in the promotional period afterwards. I also applied the same questions to my project that I asked the partners of the businesses in the previous case studies (as outlined in the appendix). The first part of the chapter provides a short historical background for my music in order to position this case study.

The second part of the chapter presents somewhat as a narrative—where I discuss the methods and issues surrounding the recording and the release of a recording designed for a small-scale niche audience and the benefits of the accumulation of symbolic capital. The insights gathered by examining my own project were invaluable, and helped to establish my conclusions for this thesis. As this was the last case study it provided me with a space to delve even deeper into the motivations of an artist in the small-scale industries. Many of the artists interviewed have been reluctant to discuss in depth their personal income or any other benefits drawn from the release of small-scale products. It is for this reason I have decided to discuss the benefits of the generation of symbolic capital openly in this chapter. In doing so I report the symbiotic relationship my music career has with my academic appointments, my public speaking career, and my career as a DJ.

I have been involved in public performance for over a decade. Initially I was involved in a number of theatrical performances, visual art, film and script writing. In 2005, when I traveled to New York to partake in a course related to my undergraduate degree, I decided to focus on musical performances. I played a number of 'open mike' nights, and I was heavily encouraged by my American counterparts to release my music and pursue a career. Upon my return to Brisbane in

2006 I recorded an album with a local producer, Anthony Pink. Once I had released my first record I started to play shows regularly in Brisbane, whilst working a number of casual hospitality jobs.

In Brisbane I also formed a free improvisational band called 'Lost of Love', it was this band, rather than my solo music, that helped me to achieve some notoriety within the Australian small-scale 'indie' scene. In 2007 'Lost of Love' were thrown off stage while playing a public gig paid for by the Brisbane City Council. The Australian media heavily covered this story (see Figs 10 and 11), and as the lead singer of this band my interviews and public responses generated further attention for the band and myself. Later that year I released an EP under my own name and traveled to Berlin to play shows. There I caught the attention of radio station Motor FM which played the single 'Tacky Song' off my EP. When I returned to Brisbane this event had further fueled my public profile. Due to this notoriety I was invited to speak at a number of industry events, and from these appointments I was invited as a guest lecture at local university, Griffith.



Fig. 13 James O'Brien and Matthew Harrison of 'Lost of Love' being shut down in the Valley Mall August of 2007 Photo by Isidro Guglielmino

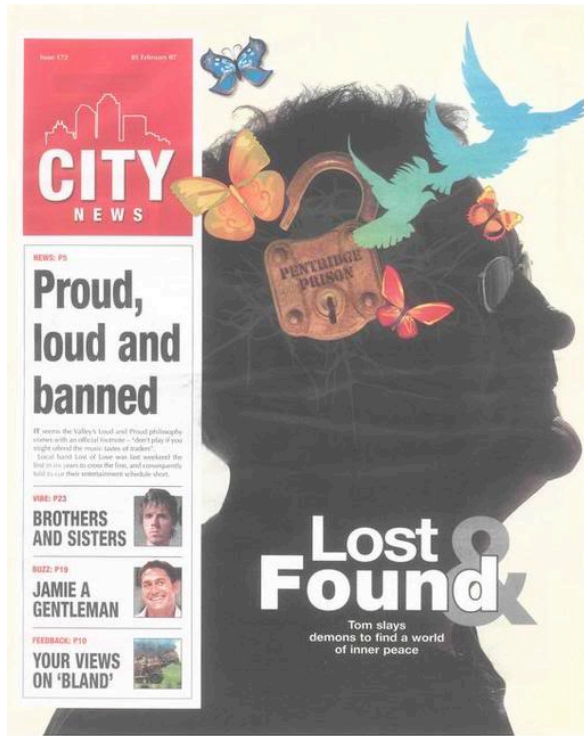


Fig. .14 City News Cover Story about 'Lost of Love' being shut down

In 2008 I released a full-length record called 'Late At Night'. I toured this record independently around Australia. One of the posters for this tour featured a parody of the General Electric logo. This led to a threatening letter from a law firm which I posted on my blog, along with a satirical reply. This generated further media attention, which in turn lead to my albums selling well.⁵ Progressing from this I was signed to a large-scale management firm and received some interest from record labels (although my unwillingness to compromise my artistic values prevented me from pursuing any labels past the early courting stages). I played a number of shows supporting established Australians musicians, and although my career was not providing me with significant income, as my cultural capital accumulated I was offered other forms of employment.

⁵ <http://blogs.abc.net.au/queensland/2009/01/general-electri.html>

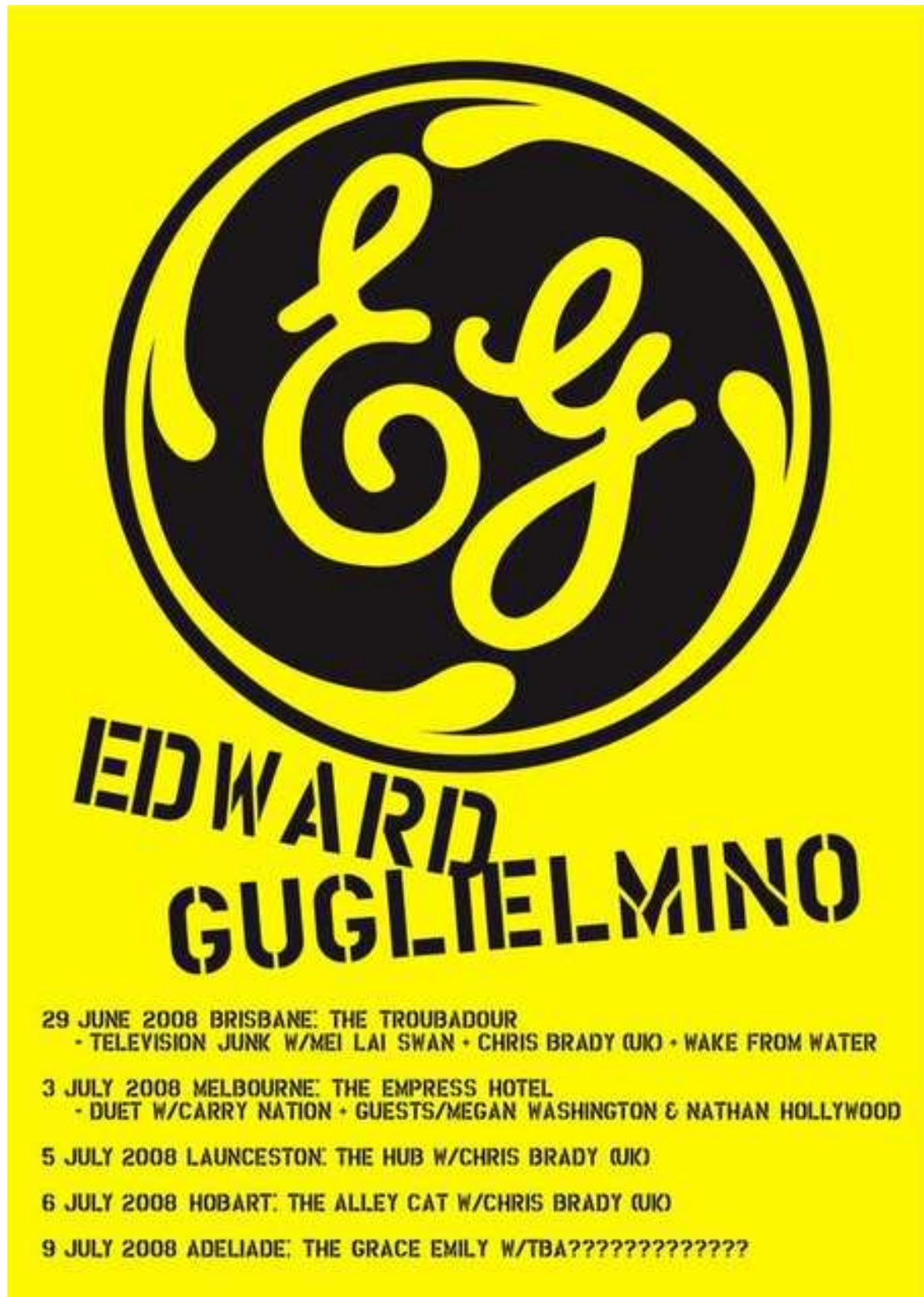


Fig. 15 Tour Poster which lead to threat of lawsuit

NEWS

Penniless muso takes on Goliath

GOOD FIGHT
WORDS: GRANT STOCKWELL

A BATTLING Brisbane musician is locked in a David versus Goliath battle with a giant global corporation over the use of his logo. Edward Guglielmino was last week contacted by Sydney trademark attorneys Chrysiliou Law acting for international company General Electric, warning him to abandon his trademark.

But a defiant Mr Guglielmino said he would not be bullied by General Electric and promised to fight with all his might.

"I've got a friend who is a criminal lawyer but we haven't needed to get that heavy yet," Mr Guglielmino said.

"I'll definitely stand up to them. I am not even worried about it. I am an unemployed artist, so they can take me to court and hang me out to dry and they will get nothing. I'm totally broke."

In the letter sent to Guglielmino's manager Ben Preece on January 16, Andros Chrysiliou urged the unemployed musician to find himself a new logo.

"You are a performing artist and as such, you should appreciate the damage you would suffer if someone was to plagiarise your work," Mr Chrysiliou wrote.

"I am sure you would want people to respect your work and its originality. I am asking you to do the same in respect to our client's GE monogram logo. It is an important piece of intellectual property and our client needs to preserve its rights therein."

Mr Guglielmino performs more than 60 gigs a year and he started using his logo, which appears on a small quantity of badges and posters, six months ago.

"It's a really popular little logo. I was aware of their logo and the similarities and this is purely a satirical remark on the role of corporations in modern society."

Mr Chrysiliou said there were no immediate plans for legal proceedings but requested that Mr Guglielmino comply with General Electric's request.

"We don't intend to use our muscle to stand over him but we would hope that he would understand our position and comply with our request."



BRING IT ON: Edward Guglielmino will fight to retain his registered trademark of EG.

RD160977

Fig 16. City News story on the Logo Dispute

As Bourdieu has noted, within the field of cultural production the 'loser wins' and there is a 'systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all other economies' (1993 p. 39). The fact I had not been signed to a label or supported by a major radio station despite my notoriety was leading to the generation of cultural capital. Soon I was offered a contract to teach at the private academy JMC. My salary allowed me to invest more into my music, which in turn helped my career to progress. I played a number of shows in Europe and America from 2009-2012. In this time I also wrote a critique of the Australian music industry which went viral online, providing me with another round of free publicity. These events did not lead to my albums selling to a degree where I could support myself from music, however as my public profile advanced, so did my career as a lecturer and tutor. In 2010 I enrolled in a Masters Degree at QUT, this opened doors at public universities and I began lecturing and tutoring at the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, and Griffith University.

Aside from my accumulation of economic capital, I was also noticing other 'fringe benefits' from my esteem. Often I would receive tickets in the mail to opening nights of cultural events care of the state government or sometimes through a private cultural company. I would arrive and often find that my drinks had been taken care

of, and that my seat was front row. CHUGG entertainment put me on their permanent guest list, this company tours a lot of very well know heritage acts (such as ‘Deep Purple’ and ‘Journey’), so I was able to take my father to a number of shows free of charge. On a number of occasions my companions in more established bands would also send me backstage passes to their concerts—or in some cases to an entire festival. These restricted areas have special benefits for the musicians which are not available to the general public including free food, various free cocktails and drinks and other party favors, also in most cases there is a lack of police presence, which is usually heavy front of stage at a large-scale music event. These lifestyle benefits also have economic value. For example, the ticket I was given to ‘Splendor in the Grass’ (a large-scale Australian music festival) had an economic value of \$500.

Aside from my career as an academic, I was also moonlighting as a DJ at a number of nightclubs in Brisbane. Although my career in music has not directly provided me with a comfortable salary, the majority of my income is provided by work that has arisen as a result of my perceived esteem in the music industry. Furthermore, I receive a large amount of what I would term as ‘experience capital’ in the form of the free entry to shows as outlined above. In 2011 I formed a satirical band with British musician and critic Everett True⁶. This band released two singles with British pop star Kate Nash. We also toured the East Coast of Australia with Nash. Once again a side project of mine received a large amount of media attention, as we purposely played our instruments poorly and made fun of many established ‘indie’ rock bands. Progressing from this I have also been given all expenses paid trips to Hobart to play MoMa a progressive art museum close to the city, and recently I have been paid well to play a number of government sponsored gigs which showcase Queensland musical talent. A number of the events mentioned here are covered in detail on Wikipedia, with links to media converge⁷.

⁶ aka ‘Jerry Thackeray’ who famously introduced Kurt Cobain to Courtney Love (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Everett_True)

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Guglielmino

THE THIN KIDS

THE THIN KIDS ARE AN INTERESTING PROPOSITION; ARROGANT, IRREVERENT AND ALMOST CERTAINLY AN IN-JOKE THAT WILL PERPLEX AS MANY AS THEY AMUSE. DAN CONDON TRIES TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON.

The band proclaim on their MySpace page "we're better than you", but vocalist Everett True explains that this is most likely being taken the wrong way.

"My apologies for that tag-line, I hope no one has taken offence at it: it was an in-joke that got out of hand," he starts. "It was actually me telling Ed G [fellow band member Edward Guglielmino] 'I'm better than you' when we were arguing over who should be lead vocalist. As I'm rock royalty, I always refer to myself in the plural. He sings like a strangled cross between Robert Smith and Peter Dinklage with a back ache. I don't. I rest my case..."

Literally, the band often use their songs as a platform to take pot shots at Brisbane and the music scene in which they currently exist. Guglielmino gives us an insight into the writing process.

"Everett likes to pretend he writes the lyrics down but really after to green teas he starts ranting and raving and I just hit record and try to play along!" he says.

So what are these crazy cats planning to do next?



"Our debut album is planned as a Sarah Blasko tribute – her songs sung the way we know she really wanted them to be," True quips. "Our second album will only feature musicians given an 8.3 rating, or higher, in *Time Off*. We are already taking applications for groupies of all sexes."

Application submitted. Though, for the record, *Time Off* uses a five star rating system for our album reviews. But we're flattered nonetheless.

WHO: The Thin Kids

WHERE & WHEN: The Troubadour Wednesday Feb 24

Fig. 14. An article on 'The Thin Kids' in Time Off issue 322

Positioning this case study.

In the later part of 2012 I was preparing to release my third full-length record, 'Sunshine State'. This was to be my first solo release in three years and it was to be my first to be pressed to vinyl. My career had progressed to a stage where I was making a comfortable living. I knew from discussions with my peers that my personal income was greater than many of my contemporaries who were in more established and recognised bands (I will offer some more empirical evidence to support this in the conclusion). Due to the developments outlined previously, at this stage in my career I was able to produce an album where economic considerations were secondary regarding the reception of the album. The main economic consideration I had was a desire to cover the production costs from album sales and some live shows. Creatively I was hoping that this record could be my most innovative, I had spent some time writing songs with some economic considerations in mind, and I had hoped that this record could be more expressive. I had also noted that, it appeared rare that an artist would move to the large-scale production model

and retain their cultural capital, thus I was unmotivated to attempt to establish myself as a large-scale musician.

This noted, I was aware of the cultural esteem that an innovative record would create, and this 'symbolic capital' could be converted into economic capital in the form of academic appointments, public speaking engagements and DJing. My perceived autonomy was also, to a degree, being used by my management company and myself to present a narrative about my music, which in turn helped to market it to a specific audience.

Recording my third full-length record 'Sunshine State'

Regarding the nature of the album *Sunshine State*, the main agents in its 'Art World' (Becker 2008,1982) were myself as the composer, Jamie Travaskis as the producer and Samuel Schlencker, who wrote most of the arrangements for the record with some input from myself and Travaskis. The three of us had a fairly similar artistic vision for the record, which was that, in view of my current reputation in the field, I could make a more expressive and innovative record than my previous releases. The three of us had the view that we should record the record with an ethos centered on values of an artistic nature, and there would be no consideration of potential singles or the marketability of the music. My management company and I had both discussed that rather than the music being the selling point for the record, the concept of the outsider artist was the main attractive aspect of the album.

The agents—‘Mucho Bravado’ Sam Schlencker and Jamie Travaskis—were all employees of mine. Schlencker received song writing credits and a percentage of the intellectual property on two of the songs, and he was paid \$50 for each performance. He was also keen to use the album to build his compositional portfolio. Travaskis was being paid a set fee of \$4000, a reduced rate which he offered me as he wanted the record release to have few economic concerns. My management company receives a 20% commission on all of my music related income, and I pay them a set rate to employ a publicist. All expenses that I incur as a musician can be written off as tax deductions due to the symbiotic relationship between my careers.

Being the center of this study also provided me with an understanding of why, when interviewed, the participants in the other studies used had issues explaining their view on the generation of economic capital: To be forthright about the economic requirements of directing a small-scale label can be damaging to your perception within the key market for ‘authentic’ small-scale musical goods, and also can make relationships with your collaborators difficult to manage. It was clear that my musical collaborators within the creative process were very uncomfortable with any mention of commercial appeal or market for the record. Towards the end of my research for this thesis I started to discuss my findings with them, and the ideas of symbolic capital. This too seemed to challenge their perceptions of their motivations and led to some arguments, so eventually I decided to keep this aspect of the records product hidden from them as best I could.

The final release was titled ‘Sunshine State by Edward Guglielmino & The Show’ and I invested approximately \$14,745 in the record, as such I was concerned about how its key audience would perceive it—I was aware that my market felt the same way about music as my two main collaborators did—so in the end I had to trust them fully in their aesthetic choices. I considered the best market for the product to be that particular category of music fans who are interested in autonomous music and who are keen on a product that does not interact with the market in the same way that a major label release would, and appears not attempt to engage with the machinery of mainstream culture. Additionally I was keenly aware for the need for the record to have some commercial success to recover its costs —my experience in the field had

taught me that a small-scale release must, nevertheless, receive some media attention in order to be marketed to its niche audience.

Costs associated with Sunshine State:

Recording the album - \$4000

Mastering the record - \$2000

Touring with my band interstate - \$3212

Fee for the publicist - \$2321

Purchasing of the advertisements - \$3212

Total = \$14,745

Releasing Sunshine State.



Fig 18. Album Launch May 19 2012 at the Judith Wright Center, featuring Edward Guglielmino and Rowland Marshall. Photo by Andrew Wade.

In May of 2012 my management company, Mucho Bravado, released the record using traditional major label methodologies (as outlined in the contextual review)—they publicised the record and distributed the album to a number of radio stations and magazines in both mainstream and underground media. I toured the record with my band ‘The Show’. The album was well received in the music press and sold more than the expected 300 units (currently I have sold 335 CDs and 135 vinyl records,

plus 421 Internet downloads). Time Off—a Brisbane street magazine—declared it ‘Album of the Week’⁸ and it was the most played record on community radio station 4ZZZ 102.1 for four weeks⁹.



Fig. 16 Album Launch, May 19, 2012, at the Judith Wright Center. Featuring Edward Guglielmino and Kirsty Tickle Photo by Andrew Wade

Key tracks were played on the national radio station, Triple J, and many other community radio stations located interstate gave it extensive play. During the East Coast tour to promote the record, my band and I stayed at a number of luxurious hotels and visited a number of cities down the east coast of Australia, ate dinner out, and visited tourist attractions. Due to a fan of my music also working for a hotel booking website, she was able to get us heavily discounted rates on four and five star hotel rooms. After my first East Coast tour as a further promotional device, I asked a friend of mine, Kate Miller-Heidke, who is an ARIA award-winning popular artist and who had mentioned that she liked the record and would like to sing on a track with me in the future, to perform a track with me for video. I arranged this and we uploaded a video of the performance to YouTube¹⁰.

⁸ Time Off Magazine issue #332

⁹ 4ZZZ Top 20 archive. Available at <http://www.4zzzfm.org.au/top-20>

¹⁰ Performance with Kate Miller-Heidke. Located at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPjYiPXTMxo>

Aside from the last example (which Schlencker protested against) none of these successes were seen as negative (considering the original intention of the band and the producer was to create a record which was autonomous and artistically innovative). Although to this date the record has not been as economically successful as my second album, 'Late At Night', it has opened new doors for me culturally. Since its release I have been nominated for the Grant McLennan Fellowship twice (in 2012 and 2013) —a prestigious Queensland cultural award—and I have been invited to play MoNa—a leading avant-garde art gallery in Hobart—three times. By these measures this record was not a failure—economically and critically it achieved its aims. No one in the band or the producer was disappointed in the album's success, despite their initial oppositional outsider art ethos.

6 QUEENSLAND LIFE

the critical list

MUSIC with Noel Mengel



CLASSICAL
JAN LISIECKI
Mozart Piano Concertos 20 & 23
 (Deutsche Grammophon)

SPARKLE is a dominant feature of Mozart's music. Sure, he wrote some pensive stuff but bubbling vitality was his mark. Polish-Canadian pianist Jan Lisiecki, dubbed "the Justin Bieber of classical music", brings generous doses of sparkle to Mozart's piano concertos 20 and 23. At 26, Lisiecki is a pianist on the rise. He debuted with BBC Symphony in March and is set for a December debut with New York Philharmonic. Christian Zacharias, also a noted pianist, conducting Symphonieorchester des Saarländischen Rundfunks, works with Lisiecki to reproduce the crystal clarity of Mozart's writing. Zacharias provides an alert, comfortable orchestral setting over which Lisiecki spreads layers of rippling melodies. There is no romantic glow to the C major concerto's fanned andante movement. Lisiecki and Zacharias deliver it with musical focus and intelligence, no danger zones there.

Patricia Kelly



ELECTRONIC
LABRINTH
Electronic Earth
 (Epic)

THE debut album from English musician Labrinth is an interesting experiment. He's another producer who aims to become an artist working with the electronic sounds he helped create for others. Unlike a few other producers, who have taken this path, Timothy "Labrinth" McKenzie can actually sing. Labrinth's pop-rap lyrics are anything but ground-breaking. "Cowgirl, cowgirl why you love me high and dry" and "I feel a cold flame going through my hair" are a couple of the lyrical gems that Labrinth offers up. But there's no denying the singer, who is mentored by Simon Cowell, has produced some catchy dance songs. A standout is "Expensive Journey" with its upbeat mix of positive lyrics, pulsing bass and dynamic vocals. The tunes do become repetitive, but for the mindless moaning and party atmosphere these songs were designed for, they certainly do the job.

Brittany Vance



ROCK
EDWARD GUGLIELMINO
Sunshine State
 (Machete Records)

BEESKANE songwriter Guglielmino was in an altered state when recording debut album *Late At Night*, working as the taxi came up after another late night working at local venue The Troubadour. He keeps more convulsed hours now but the altered state remains on this powerful second album, with his deep, dark voice and an aesthetic that feels as much European as it does Brisbane. His band The Show can cast shadows in striking red-on-black-and-white or explode into a seething crescendo. Encouraged by his producer Jamie Theriault, some of *Sunshine State* captures Guglielmino and band busily winging it like Grace Under Fire or exploring the spaces between sweet dreams and fevered nightmares on songs such as in the Morning. As Guglielmino notes, Theriault is from the David Lynch school of record production. The results make for uneasy but rewarding listening.

Noel Mengel



ROCK
M. WARD
The Whistling Companion
 (Sputnik)

IN HIS successful side project with actor Zoshy Deschanel, American songwriter Ward shows his affection for a not-so-'50s sound, quiff, twangy reverb guitars and wistful melodies included. That's not quite so evident in his solo work, although on this seventh solo set he does include a swinging version of the old Louis Armstrong tune "I Got Ideas" while an upbeat cover of Daniel Johnston's "Sweethearts" features Deschanel's winning cee. You could imagine the shimmering *Late Time With Tom* session Glen Campbell too. Primitive Griftounds along on a thumping piano, while "There's A Fly" is the kind of finger-picked acoustic guitar tune that could emanate from a Greenwich Village coffee club circa 1964 or a folk festival in 2012. For a taste of Ward's subtle touch, check out opening tune *Clean State*, which is dedicated to the late Alex Chilton.

Noel Mengel



ROCK
KILLING JOKE
Mxxxi
 (Spleen/Panoramic)

KILLING Joke's 15th studio album is a bleak concept album that foretells the downfall of life as we know it. Epic opener *Pale Sky* begins with a foreboding, sparse few notes but by the 20-minute mark, the familiar sound of the classic line-up of Killing Joke have lost none of their rage. FEMM Camp's less socially abrasive but equally strong in the lyrical department, *Colony Collapse* predicts a future where "left-assembling needs" make the human race redundant, while *Corporate Elect* casts its scorn home with the chorus "It's an AOD generation, everybody accepts the introduction of slavery by a corporate elect". In *Cybernetics* offers a brief moment of melodic respite before the onslaught resumes for *Invincible* and *Glitch*. Mxxxi might be bleak but it's also arguably the best album the band have produced since re-forming in 2002.

David Johnson



ROCK
THE WALKMEN
Haven
 (Fat Possum/Intersol)

SINCE hitting their stride with 2004's *Bones and Arrows*, New York indie-rockers The Walkmen have threatened to break through to the mainstream. On the basis of the quality of the songwriting, *Haven* may be the album to propel them to a wider audience. Opening track *We Can't Do Better* is a maulin' doo-wop number, built around Hamilton Leithauser's vocals and underpinned by understated guitar, a rudimentary bass line and his bandmates' surprisingly pitch-perfect vocal harmonies. Song for Leithauser, "I'm myself sick about you" refrain is one of the album's most resonant moments. The *Love You Love* is about as close as the band have come to replicating the visceral energy of breakout single *The Abol* and the gloomy yet beautiful *No One Ever Sleeps*, one of four tracks that features Fleet Foxes vocalist Robin Beckwith. It's hauntingly beautiful.

David Johnson

REVIEW OF THE WEEK

ROCK
John Mayer
Born and Raised
 (Columbia)

5/5

5/34 too young for a mid-life crisis? Not if you're John Mayer. After a love life lived in public (much of which fuelled his last album, 2009's *It's About Damn Time*), Mayer's decided that introspection is the better part of discretion. Which may be why his new album, *Born and Raised*, is a rebirth in more ways than one. "Now and then I look my place / I can't replace how I got here / I cheat the light to check my face / It's slightly harder than last year." Mayer sings on the title track, one of a handful in which he addresses the issue of aging. In keeping with the album's loose theme, musically he's also looking over his shoulder. It's as if Mayer has raided his parents' record collection, with much of *Born and Raised* suffused with that soft Californian country-rock glow of the early to mid-'70s. These sort harmonies, harmonicas and acoustic guitars abound, with a guest list that includes David Crosby and Graham Nash, pedal and lap steel player Greg Leisz, trumpeter Chris Botti and veteran session drummer Jim Keltner. At times it's more Beatles than Eagles, with Mayer channeling George Harrison in his guitar solo on the reflective *Shadow Days*, elsewhere he quotes Eric Clapton and the Allman Brothers, no coincidence as that band's former keyboardist Chuck Leavell is another notable guest. But the real touchstone for *Born and Raised* is Neil Young's 1972 album *Harvest* (right down to the cover art, it's not just the instrumentation, either - the songs cross over, with *Shadow Days* echoing *Heart of Gold*, whistling, whiskey, whiskey-an alcoholic's *Needle* and the *Damage Done* and Mayer's summative title track a companion piece to Young's *Old Man* "Born and raised" in half the time (I'll be twice my age / Better learn how to turn the page / 'Cause time is strange").

Phil Stafford

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couriermail.com.au 1107

Fig. 20 Sunshine State appearing in the Courier Mail Critical List article by Noel Mengel.

CD REVIEWS

CD OF THE WEEK



**EDWARD GUGLIELMINO
& THE SHOW**
Sunshine State
Independent

Edward Guglielmino is sometimes better known for his ability to stir controversy in Brisbane's musical underground than his prowess as a songwriter. *Sunshine State* should remedy that oversight. Admirably splitting the difference between unpretentious primal expression and surprisingly elegant craftsmanship, Guglielmino's second LP is a brutally raw, thoroughly evocative listen – and easily one of the best records released in 2012 so far.

The record's production plays a significant role in its triumph. Effectively a collaborative effort between Guglielmino, producer Jaime Trevaskis and drummer/multi-instrumentalist Sam Schlenker, *Sunshine State* was recorded in a lounge room of an old Queenslander. It's soaked in that sense of ambience, too. Even when songs grow more layered (as on the lushly orchestrated *In The Morning*) or more distorted (the almost tribal *Old Fire*), *Sunshine State* still sounds intimate and raw.

It's Guglielmino that ties it all together, though. His voice as a musician and as a songwriter brings an almost crippling honesty and vulnerability to Schlenker and Trevaskis' panoramas. There's something beautifully ham-fisted in the lyrical sentiments of cuts like *Healthy* ("If breaking hearts were a crime/I would sue the lot of you/For breaking this heart of mine/In two"). It's awkward and vaguely cliché but, in its unflinching honesty, it becomes genuinely beautiful.

And that kind of sums up *Sunshine State*. Despite its obvious craftsmanship (and it is beautifully crafted), it's a record ultimately defined through an almost terrifyingly honest sense of artistry. There are awkward little hiccups and flourishes, kinks in sequencing and awkward experiments, but it's so fantastically uninhibited throughout that such flaws prove not only forgivable but strangely irresistible. It's a beautiful album. Go listen to it.

★★★★½ **Matt O'Neill**

Swipe right for more reviews



Fig. 21 Time Off Review of *Sunshine State* by Matt O'Neill.



Fig. 22 Album Launch May 19 2012 at the Judith Wright Center featuring Edward Guglielmino and Rowland Marshall. (Photo by Andrew Wade.)

Conclusion

My position as an ‘outsider’ musician has clearly enabled the generation of symbolic capital, which I have been able to convert into economic capital through a number of means. Through my experience in the industry I am aware that my position is privileged: I earn what I perceive to be a comfortable living and I tour and play music around Australia and the world without it costing me any personal investment. My contemporaries who are in established large-scale bands are unable to hold down regular (non-musical) work due to their regular touring requirements, therefore, although they do receive the benefits of symbolic capital, they are usually unable to convert this into economic benefits.

As it is not easy to persuade musicians to go on record about their personal income, I have relied heavily on experiential data and my personal communications to draw these conclusions. Anecdotally, I am aware of the circumstances of a number of large-scale musicians through my contacts in the industry who also receive welfare payments, as my de facto partner works for a large-scale music management firm, and my manager also manages a number of large-scale musicians. In the final

chapter of this thesis I will provide further evidence that large-scale musicians are rarely economically better off than their small-scale counterparts.

As a final note, on the second of August 2013 I filed for my tax return, although my total income was only \$39,928 and my taxable income was only \$27,792 (which was surprising to me, given my previous statements) my lifestyle matches many of my associates who are employed full time. Despite my relatively low income, coupled with the ‘fringe benefits’ outlined previously, I live a comfortable lifestyle in inner city Brisbane with my partner. Moreover, a number of items that I consider to be luxurious can be deducted as business expenses.

‘There is an economy of cultural goods, but it has a specific logic. Sociology endeavors to establish the conditions in which the consumers of cultural goods, and their taste for them, are produced, and at the same time to describe the different ways of appropriating such of these objects as are regarded at a particular moment as works of art, and the social conditions of the constitution of the mode of appropriation that is considered legitimate’ (Bourdieu p 1984 p.1).

Thesis Conclusions

As my research is qualitative, and the sample is small, these conclusions are a tentative indication of the directions and issues for further research. They outline a theory regarding the nature of small-scale production in the 21st century music industry that could be tested in Brisbane and other small-scale scenes. The Brisbane small-scale scene (and the music scene in general) is a sector of cultural production which is both extraordinarily rich and vibrant, but also under-researched. I hope that this thesis and its conclusions will spark interest in further examinations are needed of this area.

The literature surrounding artistic ventures that produce products on a small-scale is extensive. However, such examinations tend to characterise these products as oppositional and standing outside the mainstream of industrial production. They also generally suggest that these small-scale movements are not interested in commercial or critical success and are producing art for art's sake (Bourdieu 1993 p51). I present evidence here that although this ethos is reiterated by the musicians, behind the protection of closed doors small-scale production is far more pragmatic, economic, and business focused than many small-scale producers are willing to reveal.

With regard to the sub-questions proposed at the start of this enquiry, the findings of this research are noted here:

1. How do small-scale, artist-run businesses contribute to the commercial and cultural ecologies of Brisbane music?

This question has been answered within the case studies with the answers given by the participants and also via some of the observations in the field. With regard to Lofly Records and El Nino El Nino the economic contributions are minimal, however the question overestimated the importance of economic capital in the running and successes of these businesses. As noted in the overall conclusions of this research, rather than contributing to the economy of music in monetary terms, these businesses generate cultural capital, which can be traded for economic capital and symbolic goods.

In the case of my own project the economic value is clearer due to the impact that my professional life has on my teaching and other related paid activities. Although the monetary gains are again only of a small value, I have traded my cultural capital for symbolic goods (as outlined in chapter 6), and further this cultural capital has lead to numerous instructional appointments which provide a stable income. These examples of the conversion of symbolic goods into economic capital directly align with the observations made by Bourdieu in his studies of cultural capital and discussed here in Chapter 2.

2. What is the relationship between profit and cultural motivations among small-scale producers in Brisbane?

The above conclusions can be expanded to understand this relationship, however, as outlined, the participants were generally protective of their economic successes (or lack thereof). The relationship here is paradoxical: for these institutions to be successful they must hide their economic capital generation. However my observation is that these relationships are clear, even if they are denied (publicly) by these participants, or if the participants are unaware of how their cultural capital is being converted into economic goods.

‘... the role of the artist is to just try to be as pure as possible in your expression and when you try to marry that with commercial ends, you just have to—and it takes a long time—you just have to come to terms with the possibility that this is not going to be your main source of income and that some very few, like probably one tenth of one percent of artists in the world get to have that luxury of just expressing themselves and it being lucrative’ (Personal Communication, Tom Cooney 2013).

It is my conjecture that this ethos, at least for the majority of the participants examined in this thesis, is somewhat an expression of values that do not necessarily limit the behaviours of the producers. Rather, it limits what they can *say* in interviews about their work. In many cases, when “behind closed doors”, small-scale

producers are interested in the same successes (both symbolic and economic) as any other creator of an entertainment product (see also Rogers et al. 2004). The primary difference is that the goods they produce are for a small audience that believes these goods to be ‘authentic’ and motivated by values centered on art and not commerce.

It is for this reason that small-scale producers must create the appearance of authenticity—within these scenes it is necessary to appear not to be motivated by goals of an economic nature, regardless of the actual nature of the works. From the three case studies examined here, I extrapolate that, in the case of many of the participants in the Brisbane small-scale scene, Bourdieu’s ‘autonomous principle’ (1993 p. 51) is in part a marketing strategy for their releases. In most cases—either consciously or unconsciously—this ethos is implicit, although their business goals and intentions may be far more multifaceted and nuanced.

I did not witness this with all my participants. In the case of both Helen Franzmann and Chris Perren I cannot report any evidence of an interest to generate an income from their creative works. Paradoxically both these artists have achieved much success within the Brisbane small-scale scene due to their natural state of ‘disinterestedness’ (Bourdieu 1984). However, in the case of the other participants, including myself, the ethos behind the creation of new works is more complex and multifaceted. Although primarily focused on goals of an artistic nature, we tended also to consider economic aspects of our work, and in my case I also pursued critical acclaim in order to convert cultural capital into economic capital—ironically by appearing to not pursue it.

In order to have the appearance of authenticity, it has been important for us to remain silent to our key market about our economic concerns and ambitions as these are seen to be contradictory. Clearly I cannot conclude with certainty that the other participants in my thesis are as aware of these internal conflicts as I am, and I doubt they are as calculating with their releases as I have been. In many cases I believe it to be a genuine internal conflict generated by two competing interests. At the time I was recording ‘Sunshine State’ I was also rereading Bourdieu’s critical essays on cultural production, which made me possibly more aware of these political and economic values within the small-scale scene than my counterparts.

This study demonstrates the degree to which one's career in a small-scale scene can be enhanced when cultural esteem translates to employability. It was surprising to discover that all participants—except in the case of Perren (who is also an academic)—had full time employment that had no relationship to music or cultural production. The role my creative pursuits have played in the development of my work life gives me an advantage these other participants do not seem to have. As my esteem increases within the Australian music scene I am increasingly in demand as a lecturer, tutor, public speaker, and DJ.

3. What are the relationships between such businesses and the scenes within which they operate?

As Bennett notes the industrial end of the music industry needs these scenes as harvesting grounds for music that appears authentic (2004 p. 3). These small-scale music businesses provide large-scale businesses with a catalogue of emerging artists and bands. Occasionally, if deemed suitable a large-scale business will sign a small-scale artist. Such was the case with Tom Cooney and McKisko in their relationship with Interia, and mine with Mucho Bravado. Although in my case this relationship has been fruitful through my sustained involvement with the marketing and distribution of my releases, as noted by Negus, often when such niche labels hand control of their pressing over to the corporate distributors they overestimate the potential sales, leading to over-production and a number of returns and costs incurred by the label (1999 pp. 58-60). This was the case with El Nino El Nino and Interia.

It is key to note here the difference between exploitation of cultural capital to achieve commercial success and the exploitation of such value for social success and personal advancement.

Small-scale production and personal income



Fig. 23 An abandoned record factory, location unknown. Photo by Frédéric Thiphagne. Accessed at <http://lesmainsnoires.blogspot.com.au/2013>

‘I think of a career musician as someone whose primary focus is on making music. I don't really think about it in terms of income. I'm not a career musician because my focus is split - music is shared with a few other things. I find my work interesting and it challenges a part of me that music doesn't. I have more income than I would than if I just played music, so I guess that opens up some other worlds of material comfort. But it's hard to say that life is easier than it would be if I had the single mindedness, hunger, belief or whatever it is that makes some musicians put all their mental eggs in that one basket. In some ways I wish that was me. It seems simpler. I wish my sense of purpose was what purely defined, but it isn't’ (Laidlaw 2011, Personal Communication).

Another common thread throughout the interviews, and anecdotally throughout the small-scale scene, is the concept that an attempt at a large-scale career is not necessarily an advantage when it comes to personal income. Within the music press there have been reports of numerous studies of large-scale music careers: Atkin and McNeal (2013) interviewed Tom Harris, who runs Australians an accountancy firm catering to large-scale, established musicians. Harris estimated that among this

group, the average income is around \$65,000 per year, which is less than the earnings of the average Australian according to the Australian Government (ABS, 2013).

‘It is a compromise but it just depends what you want to compromise and I don't want to compromise the music. I'd rather compromise how I spend my time and so I'd supplement my musical income with some other form of labor, which is, you know, that's where I've landed’ (Cooney, Personal Communication 2013).

Some Australian examples were covered by the news current affairs program ‘Hack’ on ABC radio (Atkin and McNeal, 2013) during which a number of established Australian musicians were interviewed about their incomes and lifestyles. Established folk singer Holly Throsby stated that in today’s music ecology it is possible for people ‘to have profiles where it looks like they are making money, but they are probably not’ (Throsby interviewed on Hack 2013, 10:37). Throsby also indicated that her annual income was less than \$65,000 a year.

Established Hip Hop performer Tim Levison, who plays under the name Urthboy, stated that despite selling 80 percent of the available tickets for his tour, he made no profit on the last national Australian tour he presented. Levison also said with regard to illegal downloading that ‘if you take out one part of an artists income, it is very hard to replace that’ (Levison interviewed on Hack, 2013 13:51). Finally, the program interviewed Jake Stone, the lead singer of ‘Blue Juice’, an Australian rock band with a Gold selling record. Stone stated that ‘the reality is most famous musicians are living on the poverty line... I guess it is just a lifestyle that I am used too’ (Stone interviewed on Hack 2013, 15:18).

‘The labels I liked from the 60s to the 90s... they could survive doing what we did ‘cause I think people were buying vinyl and they were buying CDs... In this period of music history you be looking back in 20 years it might be the only period of music history when small labels as well as big, but particularly small, were completely disenfranchised and everyone just downloaded stuff and no one bought anything... The last five years have been this dreadful.... We’ve seen a vinyl resurgence in the last couple of years but when Hanger was starting and our label was

starting, that wasn't even around.' (White, Personal Communication 2012)

Ruen (2012) has undertaken a study of the lifestyles and incomes of established musicians with international profiles who, despite their hard work and success, also make an income below the average. Ruen interviews a number of established musicians including Kelson Maithes, former guitarist of established rock band 'Future of the Left', who was handed £10 in the middle of the interview so he could afford to buy lunch. Maithes states:

The thing is, when the regular public – the regular music fan – see his or her favorite rock band, it is very dreamy. When they see them on stage it is like, "Oh they have made it money wise", which in eighty-five percent of cases isn't true (Ruen interview with Maithes 2012).

Ruen also talked to Ira Wolf Tuton from the band Yeasayer, who are signed to one of the US's most successful 'indie' labels, 'Secret Canadian', who comments that despite his perceived success, he is "on the phone to [his] manager, 'cause we are out of money'".

All of Ruen's respondents recount similar stories about a destitute life. He also explores the decreasing value of music as it relates to online issues—this can mean that even when an album is successful in reaching a mass audience, it may still not generate income for the artist. It has also meant a decreasing need for record stores. All of these developments have led to decreased revenue for bands that appear to be established in the music industry (Ruen 2012 N.P.)

However despite the lack sales of music being a fairly recent development there is also a large amount of evidence to suggest that record labels have been offering musicians unscrupulous recording deals throughout music history. One such example was when Virgin Records signed Mike Oldfield to a recording deal in which he was contracted to the label for ten albums: after the royalties were divided he was on a wage of twenty pounds a week (Hesmondhalgh 1997 p. 257).

As an established producer Steve Albini is also aware of the issues surrounding large-scale production. In an essay he wrote in the late nineties when albums sales were still at their peak, called 'The Problem With Music', Albini offers figures that reflect the general expenses incurred by a major label (or an 'independent' subsidiary) when a band agrees to release an album through one of the advance and recoupment models described above. He concludes that if a band were to sell 250,000 records using the conventional method of distribution and promotion a band of four members would make US\$4031.25 each (2012).

Musicians are increasingly aware that major label deals and large-scale careers do not necessarily mean an improvement in overall lifestyle—in many cases the opposite occurs. It is for this reason that, although many small-scale musicians are pursuing esteem and a small amount of economic capital, it may be the case that they have calculated the risk and outlay involved in establishing a large-scale profile and concluded that it was not worth the investment. Not only are small-scale careers beneficial as they tend to allow an artist to accumulate symbolic capital whilst producing work they are entirely happy with aesthetically, but my small samples indicate that a small-scale performer is able to pursue other work (unlike their large-scale counterparts who are normally committed to extensive promotional tours)—and is likely to earn on average more than a large scale musician, as seen in the cases of White (A Medical Doctor), Franzmann (A Cardiac Nurse), Laidlaw and Edmonton who are government employees, and myself as a sessional academic a DJ.

A prospect for further examination is whether a small-scale artist like myself, White, or Franzmann could indeed have a larger personal income than a large-scale artist? It can be easily assumed from the available data, but cannot be concluded.

With regard to the sub-questions proposed at the start of this enquiry, the findings of this research are noted here:

Avenues for further research

Due to the limitations of this thesis, I was unable to collate a large amount of numerical data on income, albums sales, or ticket sales. Entering into this research

project I expected that I would collect more such data. However I was soon to find that these small-scale musicians are protective of such information. I have noted that when the participants are aware of the publication of their details they are reluctant to discuss business, income and economic concerns because this may have a negative effect on their standing in the small-scale 'indie' music scene. Further study of the Brisbane small-scale scene involving a larger number of businesses examined under an empirical model would be highly beneficial. .

I hope that this research can be built upon with quantitative studies of the lifestyles and incomes of small- and large-scale musicians. The finding that small-scale artists may possibly earn higher incomes than their large-scale counterparts is for me the most surprising.

What is required to further my tentative research steps into this complex field is a sociological study much like those that inspired this thesis and the many other works outlined in the literature review: Bourdieu's imperial studies of French culture in *Distinction* (1984), *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), and *Art Rules* (1996). They provide a framework for the examination of broad cultural trends based upon income, education, and class and location. An empirical study that uses his approach would be highly beneficial to the Brisbane music scene. Similar frameworks have been adapted by O'Connor (2008) and Strachan (2003) in their wider surveys of small-scale production in the music industries.

'Paradoxically, the games of culture are protected against objectification by all the partial objectifications which the actors involved in the game perform on each other' (Bourdieu 1984 p. 12).

Bourdieu's research indicates that he was indeed aware that artists were playing a 'game' within the field of cultural production. However the re-imaginings of his work through research into small-scale production tend to reinvent his work as simpler and more linear.

'This double ambivalence inclines writers and artists to form an ambiguous image of their own position in the social space and of their

social function: this explains why they are given to wide oscillations when it comes to politics' (Bourdieu 19996 p. 59).

Bourdieu's examinations of cultural production do not contend that artists have a set ethos or framework; rather, that they are better understood as taking part in a symbolic game. This research reiterates that precept: no vision is stable and nothing is simply as it seems, rather, human beings remake themselves within different contexts, rarely presenting themselves and considering themselves the same within different symbolic and economic environments.

Appendix

Questions asked of the participants:

1. What was the primary reason for starting your business?
 2. Do you have a mission statement or a philosophy that you are guided by as a company?
 3. Would you be able to offer me an idea about what small-scale production is – or do you have a definition?
 4. If you were offered a merger or an acquisition with a major would you accept?
 5. Did you look at other small-scale music businesses for inspiration?
 6. To what extent to you engage with traditional music businesses?
 7. What devices do you use to run your business? Laptop, Smartphone, iPad, snail mail.?
 8. Do you ever work on your business at your place of employment?
 9. What percentage of your income is derived from your business?
 10. Do you have a final goal for your business? What do you offer your artists?
 11. Would you continue working for your business if it never made a profit?
 12. How many employees / volunteers do you have?
 13. Are they paid?
 14. What incentives are they given to work?
 15. What do you offer the artists on your label?
- transitional businesses?

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